

**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS' RESPONSE TO LEARNERS WHO  
ARE ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV AND  
AIDS: A STUDY OF TWO RURAL SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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## **Declaration**

This dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. All the sources used have been indicated and acknowledged accordingly.

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Student's signature

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Supervisor's signature

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Date

## **Dedication**

To my mother 'Manthokho and my late grandmother 'Maqhaola 'Moeder,' whose belief in my work sustains me.

My brother Ramakoe, sisters, Puseletso and Tshepiso and their families who cheer me in every venture.

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Finally and always, to God Almighty, whose love, grace and nurturing make life easy. God has dealt to me a measure of faith.

## **Summary**

This study locates itself within the confines of an interpretivist paradigm and uses qualitative methods to explore how School Management Teams (hereafter SMTs) respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable, particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS. The study explores how SMTs draw on their available assets such as teachers, learners, and community members to care for and support learners who are orphaned and vulnerable. In other words, it explores how SMTs through continuous and dynamic interaction with other levels of the ecosystem contribute to change the unfavourable conditions of these learners. By drawing from the resources available within and outside the school, the SMTs are able to respond to changing the conditions of orphaned and vulnerable learners. Focus group interviews were used to access participants' understanding and experiences of managing orphaned and vulnerable learners in their school contexts. Within the focus group sessions, participatory techniques were used as a means of drawing out experiences of people in a dynamic group interaction atmosphere, namely focus groups which also involved the use of collage. I have found that SMTs rely overwhelmingly on external assistance whereas vulnerability and orphanage can be better addressed internally, that is using teachers, learners and community members. It is imperative that SMTs' involvement should go beyond their participation as recipients of service, and they should seek to understand contextual and social factors related to orphaned and vulnerable learners in their school context. Moving beyond this, there is an even greater need to explore orphanhood and vulnerability in rural schools. Though reforms of education systems have been initiated, these have not penetrated all classrooms, thus affecting the overall quality of education especially in rural areas.

## **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
CAPRISA	Centre for AIDS Development Research and Evaluation
CAPRISA	Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HoD	Head of Department
HRSC	Human Sciences Research Council
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NRF	National Research Foundation
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children due to HIV and AIDS
SABCOHA	South African Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNAIDS	Joint United Programmes on HIV and AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

*“The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and cooperation. Their lives should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences. However, in many countries now around the world, the HIV and AIDS epidemic can be depicted as a succession on many hard won children’s right gains. HIV and AIDS epidemic is producing orphans at an alarming rate, impacting in their lives vividly. The whole nature of childhood is changing fundamentally.”*

(United Nations, 1997).

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The AIDS epidemic has created over 41 million people living with HIV. Sub-Saharan Africa remains by far the worst affected region with 25.4 million living with HIV (Smith, 2006). According to Smith (2006), 3.1 million people worldwide died of AIDS-related illness in 2004. As the number of people dying from HIV and AIDS increases, so too, does the number of children orphaned by the pandemic. It is estimated that every day 1 600 children die of AIDS and 12 million children thus far have been orphaned by HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa alone (SABCOHA, 2007). UNICEF estimates that in Southern Africa, this number is expected to reach 20 million by 2015 (UNICEF, 2006a). In the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, the rising number of orphaned children and child-headed households is becoming a challenge, with far-reaching implications for many countries. In South Africa, the onslaught of HIV continues to hit hard; a report by SABCOHA (2007) indicates that South Africa continues to be severely impacted by the HIV and AIDS pandemic, with a recent estimate of 5.5 million people living with HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS & WHO, 2006). Furthermore, it is estimated that by 2010 South Africa will have two million orphans, and roughly 15% of all children under the age of 15 years are expected to be orphaned in 2015 (Skinner & Davids, 2005). There is a clear recognition that the responsibility of caring for orphaned children is a major factor in pushing many extended families beyond their ability to cope.

Orphanhood is part of all communities, as there will always be children who have the misfortune of losing parents (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002). It is noted that children do not only grieve for the loss of their parent(s), but most appear also to be vulnerable due to poverty and lack of access to

shelter and education (Skinner, Tsheko, Mtero-Munyati, Segwabe, Chibatamoto, Chandiwana, Nkomo, Tlou & Chitiyo, 2004). Furthermore, as the illness of a parent reduces his/her capacity for providing care, children who live in households in which one person or more is ill continue to look after them. Overall, orphanhood and poverty can hinder educational attainment (Operario, Cluver, Rees, MacPhail, & Pettifor, 2008).

In many countries different stakeholders (families, relatives, community, institutions) routinely took in children, playing their role in the upbringing of orphaned children. However, due to HIV and AIDS, this supportive network has rapidly been eroded. The breakdown of traditional/informal systems of care and support is evidenced by a growing number of street children in developing countries (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002).

A general policy thrust shared by many countries internationally and nationally was that of HIV and AIDS awareness and the medical aspect of preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS. However, the rapid spread of HIV and AIDS in many countries have a lasting effect on young children. For example, learners who are orphaned and vulnerable experience psychological and social challenges which could affect their learning process in schools (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Giese, Meintjes, Croke, & Chamberlain, 2003; Kamper, 2008; Van Vollenhoven, 2003; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007). Orphaned and vulnerable learners are affected by the conditions under which they are educated. Bower (2003) indicates that living in deep poverty and with death, social instability and lack of action increase the vulnerability of children to abuse and neglect. Violence, forced prostitution, incest, rape and stigma that result in a negative sense of self-worth, put learners, especially girls, at high risk (Ewing, 2003; Motala & Smith, 2003). The complexity of these issues makes it difficult for schools to effectively provide support to learners.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which South Africa subscribed to in 1995, recognises that every child has the inherent right to life, with Article 3 referring to “the best interests of the child” being a primary consideration in matters concerning children (United Nations, 2001).

Following the institution of the Bill of Rights, the Southern African Developing Countries (SADC) HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework 2003-2007 (SADC Human Resource Development

Sector, 2003) has articulated clearly the guiding principles in response to HIV and AIDS-related issues, specifically referring to children orphaned and vulnerable:

- the multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral response to HIV and AIDS;
- care and support of children orphaned and vulnerable; and
- mobilisation and coordination of resources.

This clearly implies that schools should also develop effective and relevant policies and programmes that are based on active collaboration with partners at national and regional level (SADC Human Resource Development Sector, 2003). This position will enhance the capacities of schools within their social context, which in turn may support the contribution to sustainable development of the continent (Gardiner, 2007).

In South Africa, education policies have been promulgated to support all learners. The National Policy for Educators and Learners Affected and Infected by HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2001a) clearly advocates schools to be truly safe and conducive for *all* learners to learn. Furthermore, section 12 and 14.3 of the same policy suggest the incorporation of all stakeholders in the school to draw on expertise within and amongst themselves to supplement resources supplied by the state (DoE, 2001a). On the same note, the HIV and AIDS Emergency Guidelines for Educators (DoE, 2000b) require educators to create an enabling environment and re-culturate their schools to ensure that orphaned and vulnerable learners are protected.

There are also some attempts by the Department of Health and the Department of Education to assist schools in terms of implementing policies. However, Gardiner (2007) contends that these attempts have yielded little social impact on basic intervention at regional and community levels. Educators and school officials share the belief that Life Orientation (hereafter LO) educators play an important role in implementing HIV and AIDS policies (Maharaj, 2006). To make these policies effective, educators attend workshops and develop school HIV and AIDS policies. While the same authors agree on some attempts being made, they emphasize that these policies often do not address the social welfare support for learners who are orphaned and vulnerable. The schools' ability to mobilise resources and to provide care and support to learners orphaned and vulnerable is left to the school management.

This study therefore seeks to explore School Management Teams' (hereafter SMTs) response to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable within the context of HIV and AIDS. It also attempts to gain an understanding of how SMTs draw on teachers, learners and community members to respond to caring and supporting learners who are orphaned and vulnerable. It will also explore the methods the SMTs employ and the manner in which their work influences the whole school's way of responding to these learners. Lack of involvement of teachers, students and community is often linked to leadership and attitude of SMTs (Botha, 2006; Kamper, 2008). The position of SMTs in the school, particularly that of the principal, can be a link between the school and its context, for example, the community, health services, non-government organisations and civil organisation (Botha, 2006; Kamper, 2008; Van Vollenhoven, 2003). The school is a place where learners spend many years as members of a small society which exerts a tremendous influence of their holistic development. This could be more so for children who are orphaned and vulnerable; some researchers such as Ebersohn and Eloff (2006), Giese et al. (2003) and Kamper (2008) refer to a school as a node of care and support for vulnerable children. This view, according to Bredekamp and Copple (1997), sees learners as developing best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure.

In undertaking this study, I believe that those of us entrusted with teaching vulnerable children must provide care for and guide them. My personal experience as a teacher in Lesotho has encouraged me to think of ways of supporting children in their learning and development, especially those who are orphaned and vulnerable. As a class teacher I became aware of how different background and circumstances of learners influence their learning, motivation and well-being. On one occasion, when I was distributing letters for a parents' meeting, one learner did not take the letter, but remained behind in class and started sobbing. I was taken aback and asked her why she was crying. She responded, "Why are we always given letters to 'parents' while not all of us have parents? Why can't you at least address the letter to 'parents or guardians'?" I then only realized that she had been orphaned. Being a class teacher and assuming a leadership role I had nonetheless failed to know her circumstances. I realized how important it is to know each learner's circumstances and to think of ways I as an educator can support him or her.



The study will focus on a rural area in South Africa particularly prone to poverty, where being orphaned and vulnerable is rife and where extended families still play a major role in the upbringing of the children. The individual functionality of OVC is linked to, and dependent on the interaction between a variety of subsystems including the family environment, schooling environment and the wider community (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007; Ferreira, 2006; Van Vollenhoven, 2003). This relationship between the individual and ecosystem (which influences decision making and action) will be further discussed with regard to the ecosystemic theory as it permeates the study.

## **1.2. THEORETICAL LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

This research project is informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory, which has evolved from a blend of ecological and systems theory (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997). This theory focuses on the *interdependence* and *relationships* between people and their physical environment. It is a theory that reflects social relations, that is, individuals need each other for survival and social functioning, and also influence each other reciprocally. In this study, schools serve as institutionalised systems for care and support of learners, also learners who are orphaned and vulnerable (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2002; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). Schools consist of staff, learners and administrators, whose interaction and relationships are important for the survival and social functioning of the whole school (Swartz, De la Rey, & Duncan, 2004). In addition, the school as a system may interact with other systems such as families, churches and health departments, that is, the school's wider social context, which is critical in responding to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners (DoE, 2003). The ecosystemic framework will be explored more fully in chapter two.

It follows logically from this notion that SMTs, through continuous and dynamic interaction with other levels of systems, should contribute to changing the unfavorable conditions of these learners, by drawing on these resources of all the systems. Aligned with the ecosystemic theory therefore is an asset-based approach, which I will also draw on in this study.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) initially introduced the asset-based framework for the development and empowerment of communities, encouraging them to draw on the scarce and limited resources that they had. This approach therefore uses assets as a way of addressing

problems in a variety of contexts (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). It is based on the belief that all individuals, families and learning contexts have capacities, skills, resources and assets that can contribute to positive change. Furthermore, an asset-based approach enhances sustainability and intrinsic initiatives (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) also indicate that an asset-based approach is based on the belief that people who feel connected through supportive relationships more readily develop, and become people with resources who are able to solve problems in partnership with professionals. Seeing all people as problem-solvers rather than problems to be solved underpins the asset-based approach.

Being an Educational Psychology student, I am aware of the shift from a needs-based approach which views people as having problems and needing fixing, that is, the medical model or the deficit model that has been entrenched in our society (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Ferreira, 2006). Since the emergence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, especially in the sub-Saharan region, death, poverty and social instability have led to an explosive increase in the number of orphaned and vulnerable learners. While this is the case, major interventions have been implemented to tackle HIV and AIDS-related issues, for example, the SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework, the South African Strategic Plan (which is currently being reviewed) and the Norms and Standards for Educators, to mention but a few (DoE, 2000a; SADC Human Resource Development Sector, 2003). The focus of these interventions was to provide for those who are in *need*, which include schools, especially those in rural communities, still faced with challenges of providing care and support for learners orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS.

Most intervention strategies so far focus on what people need and then provide solutions from outside. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a, p. 246), in citing Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), maintain that a “needs-based approach creates mental maps of communities that encourage its members to think about themselves as fundamentally deficient and as powerless victims of their circumstances.” In contrast, an asset-based approach maps existing assets to solve the problems and supports participation and collaboration. Put simply, “it is internally focused, relationship driven and strengthening the internal capacities” (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a, p. 246).

The context of this study is on rural schools where such policy-oriented responses have not yet shown adequate results (Ferreira, 2006) and while this is so, care and support for learners orphaned and vulnerable owing to HIV and AIDS is often expected to come from schools. The

asset-based approach therefore could explain how SMTs in poverty-stricken communities provide support, that is, by drawing from the (assets) resources available in the context of the school and community. The approach will enable me to explore how the SMTs map out and apply the many gifts and capacities inherent in the individuals in their school context, in families and in communities (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). The saying goes, ‘It takes a village to create a village’.

### **1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The apparent prevalence of orphaned and vulnerable learners has been highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. However well-intended, policy oriented responses have not yet engendered adequate results (Ferreira, 2006; Gardiner, 2007). The question one may ask is whether or not the schools where learners spend most of their time are indeed supporting and caring for the children, that is, whether policy is being implemented. Another concern is the availability of initiatives by the School Management Team to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in their school context.

In this regard, the motivation to explore how the issue of orphaned and vulnerable learners is addressed in the school context stems from the fact that research on care and support often tends to focus on communities being supported from external donors, thereby limiting the capacities of the community to identify their own assets and resources to respond to issues of learners who are orphaned and vulnerable (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Ferreira, 2006). Therefore, I decided to focus on and deepen my understanding of how the SMTs from a rural area in South Africa respond to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners by drawing on resources available to the school.

It is in view of the above that this study explores SMTs’ response to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS, with specific reference to those in rural senior secondary schools.

## **1.4. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Specifically, this study will seek to answer the following questions:

- **How do the SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?**
- **What available resources do the SMT members draw upon to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?**

## **1.5. AIMS OF THE STUDY**

In line with the research questions, the aims of this study are two-fold:

- **To explore how the SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS.**
- **To identify what resources (existing and local) the SMTs draw on to respond to issues of orphanhood and vulnerability in the context of HIV and AIDS.**

## **1.6. CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY**

In order to ensure a clear understanding, I operationalise the key concepts within the context of my study.

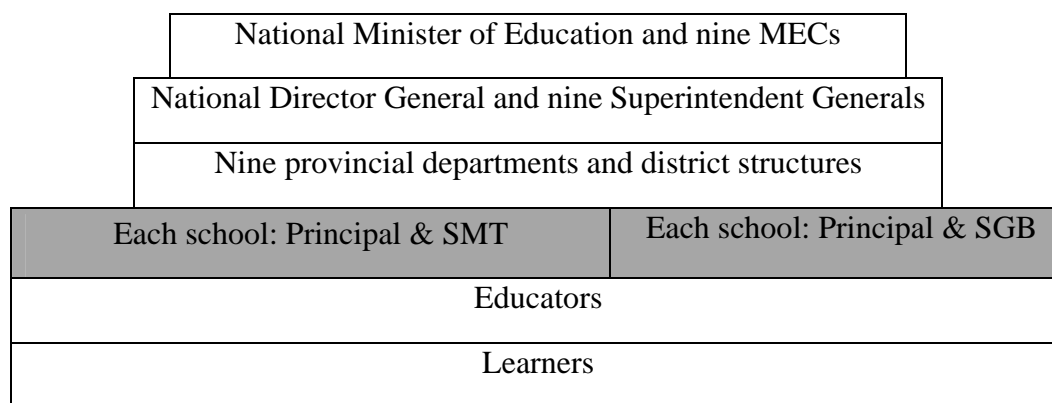
### **1.6.1 School Management Team (SMT)**

The new South African government has introduced new policies and new laws, one such being the South African Schools Act, 1996 (DoE, 1996) which creates a whole new approach to leading, managing and governing bodies. This new approach requires members of School Management Teams and members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to change the way they think about their roles and responsibilities in schools (Botha, 2006; Kelly, 2000). They need to understand a whole new school management paradigm.

The new system creates a different structure (see Figure 1.1) headed up by a National Minister of Education and nine MECs. They are supported by a National Director General and nine Superintendent Generals. In each school, the work of the principal has been broadened, but no

longer holds all the responsibility for running a school. The principal's work is now more formally shared with the Heads of Departments (HoDs). Together, they form a School Management Team. Then, next to the SMT is a parallel structure, the School Governing Body. The SMT and the SGB need to collaborate ("work together") in leading and managing the school.

The following figure depicts the new structure for the organization and management of education generally and schools specifically. It shows the shared responsibilities of different structures to effectively manage and run the school. Management of schools is depicted by the shaded area which shows that both the SMTs and SGBs have a shared responsibility for the running of the school.



**Figure 1.1 Education management structure (Sacred Heart College R&D, 1999)**

For the intention of this investigation, the term School Management Teams relates exclusively to the Principal and Head of Departments situated in the secondary phase study in public schools.

### **1.6.2 HIV and AIDS**

HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that weakens the immune system, ultimately leading to AIDS. HIV destroys the body's ability to fight off infection and disease, which can ultimately lead to death (UNAIDS, 2007b).

AIDS, the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, is caused by HIV, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a syndrome of opportunistic infections and diseases that can develop as immunosuppression deepens along the continuum of HIV infection from primary infection to death (UNAIDS, 2007b).

### **1.6.3 Children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS**

The term orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), has its own difficulties as a construct since it has no implicit definition or clear statement of inclusion or exclusion. OVC refers to cases where the child does not have certain basic rights fulfilled, and where problems in the environment of the child or specific problems faced by the child can be identified. As advocated by Smart (2003) this would include:

- Children affected by AIDS (CABA)
- Children and adolescents affected by AIDS (CAA – which is reportedly used in Cambodia)
- Children in distress (CINDI – frequently used in South Africa)
  - a child who is orphaned, abandoned, or displaced
  - a child under the age of 15 who has lost his/her mother (or primary caregiver) or who will lose his/her mother within a relatively short period
- Children in extremely difficult circumstances (CEDC – term used in Zimbabwe and preferred by UNICEF)
- Children in difficult circumstances (used in Zambia)
- Children in need of special protection (CNSP – used in Kenya)
- Children from disjointed households (Tanzania)

In the context of AIDS, it is preferable to say “children orphaned by AIDS” or “orphans and other children made vulnerable by AIDS” (UNAIDS, 2007b). For the purpose of this study OVC is used, meaning children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS.

### **1.6.4 Learner**

South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, defines a ‘learner’ as any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act (DoE, 1996). In this study a learner relates

specifically to secondary school learners situated in the secondary phase of study in public schools.

### **1.6.5 Secondary school**

The Department of Education (1996) defines secondary education, or secondary school, as a period of education which follows directly after primary education and which may be followed by tertiary education. The literal boundaries of the secondary educational phase vary from country to country but for the purpose of this study it is unreservedly linked to learners in grades 8-12.

## **1.7. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Research design**

This study will adopt a qualitative and interpretive approach to explore how SMTs respond to challenges facing learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS. Maree (2007) postulates that a qualitative mode of inquiry assists in understanding the social and the cultural context in different ways. As the researcher, I want to understand how SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. I will engage a phenomenological approach to gain in-depth insight into the SMTs' responses. The decision to utilize this particular research design was amongst other pertinent considerations based on the following reasons:

- A qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand a particular social situation or event through ongoing interaction. Cresswell (1994) suggests that this entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting. The data that emerge from a qualitative study are descriptive, that is, data are reported in words or pictures rather than in numbers. A qualitative researcher gathers detailed information through multiple, usually interactive methods (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). The focus is therefore to understand how things occur, that is how SMTs respond to issues of learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in their school context.
- An interpretive paradigm is primarily directed towards understanding – gaining meaning and understanding of individuals in terms of their own interpretation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The emphasis is on interpretive understanding (Verstehen) rather than explanation in terms of

universally valid laws (Babbie, 2004). In other words meanings and interpretation are negotiated with human data sources. Again in this study, the focus is to understand how SMTs respond to issues of learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

- De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005, p. 270) describe phenomenology as a “study that attempts to understand people’s perception, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation...[it] allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurs.” In other words, a phenomenological approach offers a descriptive, reflective and engagement mode of inquiry from which to derive the essence of experience. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) assert that a phenomenological study requires people to look beyond the details of everyday life phenomena to the essence underlying them.

Leadership and management have been highlighted in the policy and professional development literature. A phenomenological approach allows one to understand leaders outside the confines of the theoretical construct and overarching framework (Ehrich, 2003; Giorgi, 1985). In this study, a phenomenological approach is used to allow the principal and heads of departments’ (SMT’s) experiences of managing children who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS, to speak for themselves.

## **1.7.2 Research methodology**

### **1.7.2.1 The sample**

In the context of this study, the care and support for orphaned and vulnerable learners by SMTs in two schools in a rural district in KwaZulu-Natal will be the focus of this study. The two schools are selected on the basis of:

- The senior secondary schools being in rural KwaZulu-Natal (as a region of high HIV and AIDS incidence)
- The two senior secondary schools are participating in the Research Niche Area of the Faculty of Education with respect to the ‘Every Voice Counts’ project with the focus on rural teacher development in the age of AIDS (De Lange, Bhana, Balfour, Buthelezi, Mitchell, Moletsane, Pillay, Stuart & Wedekind, 2006).



Through purposeful sampling, the School Management Team (principal, deputy and heads of departments) of each school will participate in this study. “Purposeful sampling allows for the desired group as key informants to provide rich and in-depth information as required” (Maree, 2007, p. 178).

#### **1.7.2.2 Data collection and analysis**

The purpose of this study, as shown in the previous section requires that the researcher and the participants be in direct personal contact so that the research is able to yield reflective meanings and interpretations. With direct personal contact between the researcher and the participants required, this study will utilise focus group interviews (Maree, 2007; Tesch, 1990) as well as an arts-based focus group interview using collage in engaging participants to obtain detailed information. The data production strategies help to explore a particular issue, that is, how SMTs address, within the school context, the issue of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (Burton & Bartlett, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005). The audio-taped interviews will be transcribed and analysed and a descriptive analysis technique will be used, as advocated by Tesch (1990). Interpretation will be linked to the ecosystemic framework and asset-based approach, with the aim of understanding how SMTs respond to care and support of orphaned and vulnerable learners in the context of HIV and AIDS. Guba’s strategy to ensure trustworthiness (Linclon & Guba, 1985) will be applied.

#### **1.7.2.3 Ethical consideration**

In the context of this study, permission will be obtained from the Department of Education and the school principals. Furthermore, consent will be obtained from the participants, i.e. the principals, deputy principals and heads of the departments before the interviews are conducted. In order to protect the identity of the participants, confidentiality and anonymity will be consistently observed and ensured throughout the study. Ethical clearance, according to the university policy will be acquired.

## **1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

In its broader sense, this research is specifically situated in Educational Psychology, which focuses on the development and learning of the child. From the perspective of this discipline, I explore how SMTs address orphanhood and vulnerability in the school system and how they deploy intellectual and material resources to tackle HIV and AIDS that afflicts the schools. Although the SMTs are being targeted, the study does not intend to take an Educational Management slant, but merely how these participants address the needs of the learners with the aim of facilitating their optimal learning and development.

## **1.9 COURSE OF STUDY**

Chapter Two will provide a literature exploration around issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners. This review, drawing on international and national literature, will specifically address and relate to the interaction and effects of the ecosystem on the learner, regarding HIV and AIDS, and orphanhood and vulnerability in the school systems. The theoretical frameworks, i.e. the ecosystem and asset-based approach, will also be explained.

Chapter Three will discuss the methodological orientation. The major components of this chapter will include description of the research design and methodology, the sampling procedures used to select SMTs members for interviewing, and the procedure for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations and a model for ensuring trustworthiness will also be outlined.

Chapter Four will present the results of the study and emphasise how SMTs respond in the school context to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable owing to HIV and AIDS. The findings in this study will be outlined, interpreted and discussed.

Chapter Five will conclude the dissertation. It will provide a general overview of the findings related to SMTs' responses to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, recommendations will be identified and future research directions will be provided.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This study is aimed at specifically investigating how SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable. The literature to contextualize and frame the study will be presented in chapter Two.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

*The forces facing young people, stacking the odds against them, lead to a cul-de-sac of desperation, fatalism, and despair. The spectre of hopelessness in them is daunting; it looms large, surrounding them, limiting their aspiration, their possibilities for success. Our efforts in working with young people equal that of a lifeguard. Lifeguards actually provide people with an opportunity to be brave and succeed. Lately, working on issues like HIV and AIDS, in order to reach more young people, we need to redouble our efforts with yet scarcer resources.*

(Michael Carrera, 1996)

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study explores how the SMTs in a rural area respond to issues of learners who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in the school context. SMTs' structural dimensions of leadership are of paramount importance in responding to the conditions of learners. It is clear that school life is based on social interactions and the socially constructed meanings given the SMTs, educators, learners and the community as a whole. However, the ways of managing and leading in the context of learners who are orphaned and vulnerable still remain a challenge. For example, Buthelezi (2004) reports a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of individual members of the SMT (Principal, Heads of Department), leading to difficulties in addressing the additional issue of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on the part of the SMTs.

In this chapter I will initially provide an overview and informed discussion of the lifeworld of OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS, then focus on the nationally and internationally driven agenda, concentrating on current practices and plans with regard to the responsibilities of SMTs in responding to issues of orphaned and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in schools. I conclude the chapter with an exploration of the two theoretical frameworks, i.e. the ecosystemic and asset-based approaches, to emphasize their benefits for implementation amongst HIV and AIDS leadership in school communities, and to demonstrate how each asset is important to the welfare of OVC.

## 2.2. THE LIFE WORLD OF OVC (a case study)

### Case 1: Motsemocha Village

In this household a husband and wife, aged 35 and 31 respectively, are caring for eight children: their own five year-old girl and one year boy plus five other children who are orphaned. They are, a 16 year-old boy, a nephew, paternal orphan; the wife's brothers aged 14 and 12 (double orphans); a six year-old boy, a nephew, double orphan; and a five year-old boy, nephew, paternal orphan. All these children looked after their sick parents before they died, however, after the death of their parents they did not have time to grieve for their parents as they had to move to their relatives and start a new life.

The dependency ratio of this household has increased dramatically as a result of fostering children from different deceased relatives. The elder children are taking care of the younger children and other domestic chores as a result they do not have time for their homework. The six year old nephew has become quiet and withdrawn and does not want to play with the other children. The two girls are not attending school any longer as there is no money for school fees. The 16-year-old boy is in secondary school, but the foster parents are struggling to find the school fees and to buy school requirements. The foster parents are trying to persuade him to change to a technical school, as they think that this will be better for the household in the long run.

**(Adapted from Barnett & Whiteside, 2002)**

Being orphaned is a reality for many learners in many schools and it is often a family member who takes them in. They are sent to school to learn, and the many difficulties they face have to be addressed by the school in some way (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002). I cannot think of many things worse for a child than losing a parent, except to be told afterwards that their mother or father had died from AIDS. It becomes a double burden for the children: losing the parent and carrying the burden of shame, as an HIV and AIDS-related death is stigmatised. The nature of the pandemic is such that the efforts from different sectors are needed and collaboration is key.

Current knowledge (Boler & Carroll, 2003) suggests that when parents die, the amount of resources available for education decreases, as a result, orphans are more likely to drop out of school. As in the case study above, the possibility of not paying school fees is high. The most powerful obstacles to achievement remain those associated with poverty and its related stresses.

As seen in this case, the issues related to OVC may include dropping out of education due to inability to pay school fees, or low motivation to attend school due to hunger, or stigmatisation

because of not having the proper uniform and learning materials. Many children are living in families that are so poor that they cannot afford their children's basic needs (Budlender, Rosa, & Hall, 2005). Furthermore, lack of homework support may lead to low motivation for learning. Ansell and Young (2004) indicate that most southern African orphans are cared for by their extended families. Although much AIDS policies in southern Africa stress the role of communities, the burden falls mostly on the extended family households.

Increased responsibilities at home also reduce the amount of time available for education. Education becomes less relevant as children assume adult roles. Findings from a study done by Foster and Williamson (2000) indicates that, due to HIV and AIDS-related issues, children are under stress as they care for ailing parents and take care of their younger siblings. Similarly, findings presented by Kartell and Chabilall (2005) reveal that HIV and AIDS have a definite negative impact on the social and educational development of adolescents orphaned by AIDS. These adolescents are compelled to abandon their schooling either temporarily or permanently because they have assumed adult responsibilities at their home. Further inhibiting factors on these adolescents' development are abject poverty and lack of parental, social and educational support.

In response to the above issues relating to OVC, the Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000 by all countries became a blueprint for building a better world for every child (UNICEF, 2004). The years of childhood hold a special place as an ideal we all hope to realise. Schools become a place in which all children are protected from harm, nurtured and helped to grow and to develop to their full potential. The protective role that education can play in HIV and AIDS-related issues has been recognized in both national and international policies that set the framework to respond to issues of OVC. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **2.3 LEGISLATION**

Several policies and laws provide a panorama for addressing issues confronting children who have been orphaned and made vulnerable owing to HIV and AIDS. The policies on the rights of all children help keep the issues on our daily agendas (Smart, 2003).

### **2.3.1 The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The emergence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 has led to an enactment of legislation focusing on children and their protection. The South African government is also a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Smart, 2003).

### **2.3.2. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996**

Section 28 of the South African constitution outlines specifically the rights of the child. The principles that underpin the Children's Rights include:

- The right of the child to survival, development and protection from abuse and neglect.
- The principle of the 'best interest of the child' is of importance in all matters concerning children (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

### **2.3.3 The Child Care Amendment Act No. 96 of 1996**

This is the legislation for the protection of children. This Act provides that any child, whether abandoned or orphaned and/or without any means of physical support, need to be cared for (Department of Social Development, 2005). Among those involved in providing care and support are the Boards of Management of institutions including the SMT members, as well as foster parents for the daily care, school attendance and health and welfare of the child (Department of Social Development, 2005).

### **2.3.4 The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996**

The South African School Act, 1996, also entrenched state support in the form of exemption from school fees, and feeding schemes (DoE, 1996). The Act makes school attendance compulsory for learners between ages 7 and 15 years and provides for learners to be exempted

from the payment of school fees under certain conditions. This includes learners orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS (Department of Social Development, 2005).

## **2.4 NATIONAL POLICIES AND INITIATIVES**

The Declaration of Commitment of the United Nations and General Assembly Special Session on Children held in June 2002 (UNGASS), of which South Africa is a signatory, mandates countries to develop policies and strategies to provide care and support to OVC. By 2003, countries were expected to have developed, and by 2005 to have implemented, the national policies and strategies (Smart, 2003). The emphasis was to build and strengthen families and communities to provide supportive environments for all learners including those orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (Department of Social Development, 2005). Below is a discussion of the plans and initiatives relevant to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners in South Africa.

### **2.4.1 National Policy on HIV and AIDS for Learners and Educators in Public Schools, and Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions**

The policy emphasises the vulnerability of young people to HIV and AIDS and seeks to minimize the unfavorable conditions of young people. The policy therefore emphasises the need to reduce the social, economic and developmental consequences on the learners as a way to curb HIV and AIDS in the education system. It provides guidelines for the management of HIV and AIDS in schools and refers to support for both learners and educators living with or affected by HIV and AIDS (Department of Social Development, 2004).

### **2.4.2 The HIV/AIDS Emergency: Guidelines for Educators**

In a key message, the former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, emphasised the need for building an enabling school through which effective learning can take place (DoE, 2000b). He further added that while the scourge of HIV and AIDS increases, schools should remain ‘a home away from home’ for learners who will become orphaned or lose close family members or friends. These learners will need help and schools have a major role in providing care and support in the community that it serves. The emphasis was for the schools to develop their own policies in order to support learners orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS. The HIV



and AIDS Guidelines for Educators also acknowledge the involvement of other stakeholders such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local health workers to participate in developing the school's policy (DoE, 2000b). However, the question still remains, as to who has to invite these 'other' stakeholders. Whose role is it? What do SMTs draw on in responding to the issues related to learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS?

#### **2.4.3 The Policy Framework for orphans and other children affected by HIV and AIDS in South Africa.**

The Policy Framework for orphans and other children affected by HIV and AIDS in South Africa therefore honours the commitment to the children made in the UNGASS declaration (Smart, 2003). The purpose of the Policy Framework is to:

- Provide an enabling environment for more effective delivery on commitments to orphaned and other children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS at legislative, policy and programmatic levels.
- Encourage flexibility, and effective harmonisation and coordination between various legislations, policy and regulation within and between governments and between stakeholders at all levels (Department of Social Development, 2005). In other words, the plan to care for and support OVC is based primarily on the understanding that no single ministry, department or sector can be solely responsible for addressing issues of orphanhood and the vulnerability of children.

The question that this study wants to pursue is, whether, the SMTs in rural KwaZulu- Natal are able to respond effectively to learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

The above ideas have provided guidelines for care and support of OVC. The guidelines ultimately depend on being aware and understanding the legislation, policies and initiatives, as well as the mobilisation of resources, essentially building on the innovative programmes which already exist (SADC Human Resource Development Sector, 2003). Scholars such as Ferreira (2006), De Lange, Greyling and Leslie (2005), Visser (2004), Visser, Schoeman and Perold (2004), Van Vollenhoven (2003) and Sayson and Meya (2001) have argued for practices to be geared toward collective activities to support orphaned and vulnerable learners in the school

context. It is significant to note that the interaction between the learners, educators, SMT, community, socio-economic and environmental dynamics all require attention for addressing issues related to orphaned and vulnerable learners. Orphanhood and vulnerability find their cause in the whole ecosystem, and therefore the solution for addressing issues should be located in the whole ecosystem as it is explained in section 2.5.

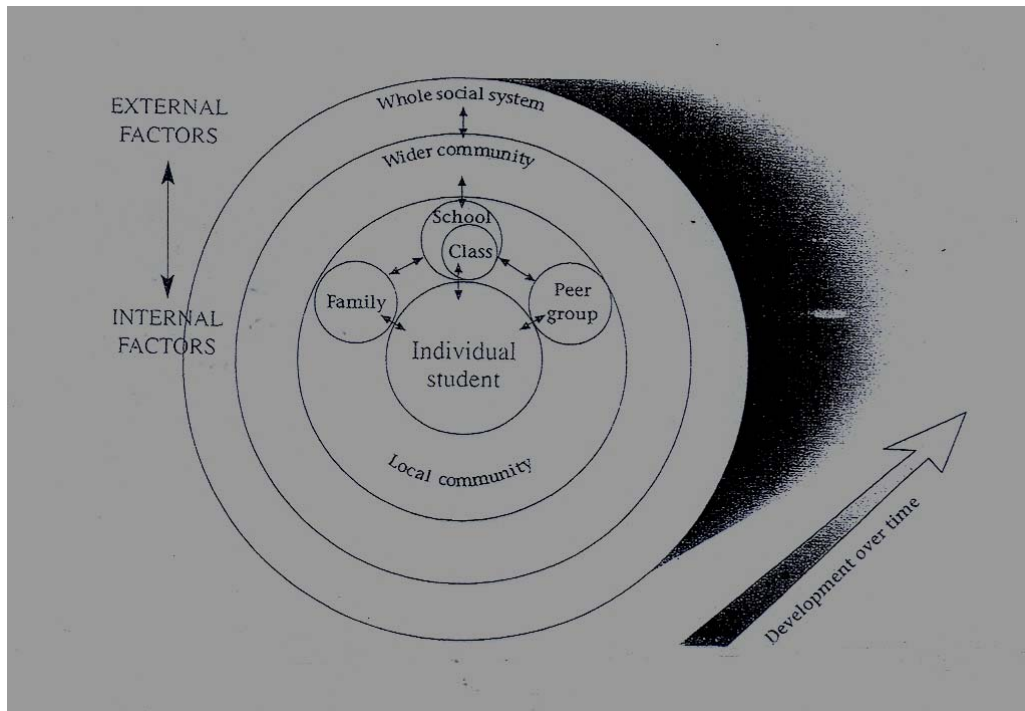
## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE STUDY**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

The ecosystemic perspective has evolved from a blend of ecological and systems theory (Donald, et al., 1997). The theory's major focus is on the *interdependence* and *relationships* between people and their physical environment. It is a theory that reflects social relations, that is, every individual needs each other for survival and social functioning. Donald et al. (1997) add that this development involves a continuous process of adjustment and accommodation between people and their environments. It is evident that individual growth and functioning does not simply occur in a vacuum but rather as a continuous interaction between individuals and various environmental considerations.

### **2.5.2 Bronfenbrenner and ecological theory**

Ecological theory is central to Bronfenbrenner's concern (Santrock, 2006) and his work is receiving increased attention in terms of the social context in which children develop. He views a child as embedded in a number of environmental systems and influences. These include schools, teachers, parents, siblings, the community and neighbours, peers and friends, the media, religion and culture. Santrock (2006) and Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) argue that the social context can have powerful influences on a child's development. To Bronfenbrenner, "environmental systems range from close interpersonal interaction to broad-based influences of culture" (Santrock, 2006, p. 71), in other words, his theory has been instrumental in showing how different contexts of children's lives are interconnected. He identified four systems namely: microsystem, mini-ecosystem, meso-ecosystem, and macro-ecosystem and recognized the importance of the connection between these systems in the environment in which the child develops. A schematic plan of the ecosystem for children, a concentric structure, is shown in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: Levels of systems related to education (Donald, et al., 2002, p.47).**

System theory draws attention to the relations between macro and micro levels where “the functioning of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts” (Donald et al., 2002, p. 47). For the purpose of this study, the most immediate relevance of this theory lies in developing an understanding of the school and the relationships within, as well as between its social context to respond to challenges facing learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. A school, for instance, is a system with different parts, consisting of the management (SGB and SMT), its staff, students and the curriculum. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006b) and Swartz, De La Rey and Duncan (2004) concur that a strong correlation within the inherent capacities, skills and social resources found in each individual can be used to the benefit, survival and social functioning of the whole school.

### **2.5.3 Asset-based approach**

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) assert that an asset-based approach propagates the development and empowerment of communities from inside out. It is based on the belief that all individuals, families and learning contexts have capacities, skills, resources and assets that they may develop to become people who are able to solve problems in a variety of contexts. The asset-based approach starts from what actually exists and works within a community. Mourad and Ways (1998) point out that this approach views the ‘glass as half full’, that even in the poorest of

neighbourhoods there exists a pool of assets (skills, resources, business and institutions) that can be better linked and maximized to create a more effective community. The asset-based approach provides opportunities for outsiders to walk with the community in its journey, rather than making the path or leading the group (Minkler, 1996).

Alternative to the conventional needs-based approach, which emphasizes the needs, deficiencies and problems of communities, the asset-based approach focuses on the capacities, skills and social resources and possibilities that already exist, but which may have not yet been adequately mobilised. Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a, p.16) argue that an “asset-based approach highlighted collaborative decision making, inclusion of all stakeholders and open access to information.” By definition, the asset-based approach is relationship driven. It is clear therefore, that the characteristics of the asset-based approach can possibly be used to address the issue of OVC. Thus, by networking and establishing links across resources, programmes for vulnerable children are seemingly strengthened. An asset-based approach is about recognizing and appreciating all the surrounding people for what they know and are able to do and more importantly, approaching them with trust when a need is felt for participation and assistance (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005).

Landsberg et al. (2005) also contend that people and relationships could therefore serve as an asset, as do particular knowledge, expertise, services and financial means. Collaboration is highly valued in the asset-based approach. Devising strategies to set the supportive processes in motion is then an essential role of the SMT. Mobilising strengths and assets include empowering, appreciating and motivating potential supporters to offer their time, expertise and encouragement (Landsberg et al., 2005). Eloff and Ebersohn (2006) remark that a professional’s role should be one of providing leadership and guidance in supporting process of change, and points out that effective leadership should therefore have the ability to attract resources and support.

Applying the asset-based approach to respond to challenges facing OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS in contemporary South Africa implies that the focus shifts from deficit thinking in this case, seeing the schools (especially those in rural areas) as lacking, to mobilising and pulling together the cultural and physical resources, skills, abilities, networks and support systems (Ferreira, 2006). In other words, assets already exist and are locally available for everyday use.

School management, teachers, learners, community members, and media are regarded as agents and experts who may help to respond to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners. I regard the asset-based approach to be appropriate for exploring all the possibilities of responding to the unfavourable conditions of such learners, given that communities have historically been able to respond to such issues through networking.

In the context of my study, care and support for OVC is often expected to come from schools. In a speech, KZN Education MEC, Ina Cronje argued that schools are often the strongest and most stable institutions for improving care to all children (DoE, 2006); however, this is done by bringing teachers and communities together with other resources to identify and address the needs of vulnerable children and their families in a coordinated and effective way. The asset-based approach therefore, could highlight how SMTs in rural schools could provide support, that is, by drawing from the resources (assets) available to the school. I will attempt to explain the following constructs in terms of their assets and their importance to the welfare of the OVC.

#### **2.5.3.1 The school**

The concept of health promoting schools introduces the view that schools should function as nodes, as hubs and as centres of care for all learners including learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2000b; DoE, 2004; Sayson & Meya, 2001; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006b). The new role for the school as the locus for care and support of OVC emphasises the identification and mobilisation of assets in the school as a system.

Mukoma (2001) indicates that school, as a caring environment for all learners, has an important advocacy role to defend the right to education of orphaned and other children made vulnerable by AIDS. While there is commitment and understanding to improve access and quality education for all learners, many learners are still out of the school (UNICEF, 2006a). Robson and Kanyanta (2007) contend that despite the removal of tuition fees and the instituting of feeding schemes, HIV and AIDS has increased the number of vulnerable children, resulting in schools, for example in Zambia as well as in many other developing countries, facing challenges of how to mobilise other stakeholders to help OVC to have access to basic education.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007) emphasise the need for a closer collaboration within schools. The authors argue that the emerging vulnerable group affects families, schools and the community as

a whole. Schools play an important role of providing learners with life skills education, that is, the schools are challenged to address the emotional needs of their children. Although many schools show that effective school involvement in OVC support is feasible, many lack the knowledge and ideas of what to do (Kinghorn et al., 2002). The aim of the study is therefore to explore how SMTs manage care and support of OVC in their school context.

### **2.5.3.2 Leadership and management**

Assets in leadership involve the development of leadership capacity in the whole school (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). The regional and local policy framework on HIV and AIDS, such as the HIV/AIDS Emergency Guidelines for Educators and the Policy Framework for orphans and other children affected by HIV and AIDS in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2005; DoE, 2000b), provide guidelines for care and support of OVC in South African schools. This calls, as Kelly (2000) contends, for a better stewardship, more “commitment by leadership and senior management to understanding the AIDS crisis and its impacts throughout the education sector” (Kelly, 2000, p. 92). The role of school principals and heads of departments in advocating for care and support of OVC is key. In a positive vein Kelly (2000) argues for collaboration between different stakeholders to respond to the conditions of OVC. In other words, a democratic leadership style that is inclusive and facilitative is viewed as an asset.

It has to be recognized that if schools are to retain their core integrity and viability as centres of learning, while also serving as places where children are provided with essential services, there must be improvement in the way schools are organized, supported and managed.

### **2.5.3.3 Human resources**

Assets in terms of human resources in a school may include strengths in interpersonal relationships across and beyond the power relations in the school (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006b). For instance, if members of staff show willingness to be open and respond to issues of OVC, this could be an asset that could have positive effects on the learning and development of all learners, including OVC.

According to Kelly (2000) educators are a central pillar in any education system. Educators are the most influential adults with whom school-going children come into contact with most often.

Boler and Carroll (2003) state that not only are educators in the Southern African region directly affected by HIV and AIDS, but they also face an additional challenge of providing care and support for OVC.

Bhana, Morrell, Epstein and Moletsane (2006) argue that the provision of basic care for OVC by educators is an asset to be explored. Those sensitive and committed teachers are creating opportunities for OVC to feel worthwhile, to dream and to start building a future (UNICEF, 2005). However, they further argue that the emotional support is still not well attended to, as teachers often lack adequate skills to provide emotional support. Notwithstanding this, teamwork in a school is an asset that could support staff in their dealing with the OVC at their workplace (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a).

Other studies (Van Vollenhoven, 2003) argue that SGBs should understand and act on law and policy regarding HIV and AIDS-related issues in their daily routines and practices, perhaps requiring a re-culturing of schools to respond to and manage HIV and AIDS in the school context. Van Vollenhoven (2003) explains that with deeper understanding of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, its causes and consequences, and with positive management of educators and learners infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, schools could alleviate the impact of HIV and AIDS. He further contends that it is imperative for SGBs not only to understand the national policies regarding HIV and AIDS, but also to develop and adopt their own implementation plan to give operational effect to the national policies. Interestingly, the author through the use of case studies of which the SGBs were responding to, indicates a disparity between SGBs' understanding of the policies and the practical response to HIV and AIDS cases in schools. Van Vollehoven study is complemented by my study to better understand how (management) SMTs define their roles and put into practice those roles to respond to issues of OVC in their schools.

Van Vollenhoven (2003) draws on the broader perspectives of section 12.1 of the National Policy on HIV/AIDS (DoE, 2001a) which states that schools or institutions must take necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of other learners, students, educators and staff members. Similarly, the DoE (2000b) clearly indicates that schools should develop their own policies on HIV and AIDS-related issues, including OVC. Schools should be centres of information and support to the community they serve, with the school management becoming proactive in initiating and sharing expertise and the development of social relationships to effectively respond

to issues of OVC. In the true sense of an asset-based approach, collaboration is a fundamental asset that could help “break out of the isolation and state of embarrassment and helplessness” (Landsberg et al., 2005, p.52).

#### **2.5.3.4 School infrastructure**

Schools’ physical infrastructure can be used in training and skills development and in promoting increased access to quality basic education for all children (UNAIDS, 2002). There is a particular important need for the SMTs to help reduce vulnerability to HIV infection, but also including extra-curricular materials such as sports and recreation to keep all children in schools. In so doing, children would be motivated to come to school and avoid exploitation and abuse. The right to education is often in greater jeopardy among OVC (UNAIDS, 2002). It is further noted that the school’s physical infrastructure is an important asset to make sure that OVC have access to knowledge, life skills, services and a safe and supportive environment. Mobilising the assets still pose a challenge to many schools.

#### **2.5.3.5 Mobilising and mapping schools’ assets**

In the following discussion, I intend to explain how the asset-based approach is reflected in the current discourse regarding OVC and how this knowledge could be utilized by SMTs to respond to these children in their school contexts.

While education is put forward as the fundamental sector in the care and support of OVC Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a), UNESCO (2006b), UNICEF (2005), DoE (1996), UNICEF (2004) call for efforts to build leadership at all levels. The national and political commitments have been essential to help schools to respond to issues of OVC. While there is no research on the involvement of SMTs, it is vital for programmes to happen on the ground (Kinghorn et al., 2002).

Asset mapping means to identify the initial list of potential participants and incorporate as many partners as possible from inside and outside the immediate environment. It is important to note that the focus on existing assets particularly in poor communities does not imply that the additional resources are no longer needed; rather as Mourad and Ways (1998) indicate, the inside-outside approach simply suggests that the development takes place only when residents



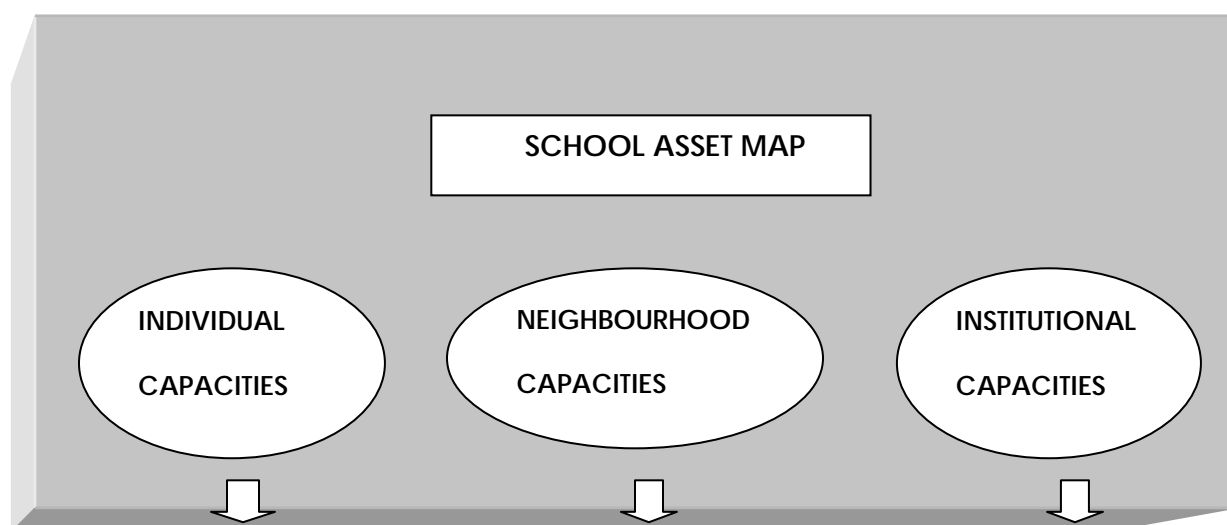
are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. In this regard the SMTs will be mapping assets which are available to the school.

So, simply identifying assets does not qualify as effective asset mapping. Strengths and assets only have use once they are engaged and functioning dynamically within relationships (Landsberg et al., 2005). Landsberg et al. (2005) further explain that mobilising assets include on the other hand empowering people and motivating potential supporters to offer their talents, time and experiences. In this regard, professionals' roles (in this case SMTs) should be one of providing leadership and guidance to attract resources and support.

Mourad and Ways' (1998) three "tiers" of community assets could be adapted to mobilise assets in order to respond to the issues of OVC in the school context:

- **Primary tier:** The most easily accessible assets are typically those that are located within the school: teachers, learners and the school physical infrastructure.
- **Secondary tier:** the next 'tier' of assets available are those that are located inside the neighbourhood but are not controlled by the school (local health centres, faith-based organisations, cultural groups, local businesses and police stations).
- **An 'outside' tier:** The least accessible assets will be those that are 'outside' the community, both in location and ownership (private businesses, national corporations, and non-governmental organisations).

The components of the inventory generally fall in three categories (see figure 2.2): individuals, associations and institutions (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). These categories provide a framework within which asset building can take place to try to respond to issues of OVC in the school context.



**Figure 2.2: Framework for asset-building (adapted from Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006)**

#### **2.5.3.5.1 Mapping individual capacities**

Each school boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build the future of all children. In teachers and learners one can discover a vast and often surprising array of individual talents and productive skills. Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007), in their study on refining home-school-community partnership in the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, revealed that a number of teachers do not focus on the strengths of their school; they rather focus on the poor physical conditions of their workplace. They contend that even buildings in urgent need of repair could be used for many community activities. Moreover, teachers do not seem to appreciate the fact that they are often the most highly qualified in the community and could use their expertise to try to attract resources in order to help learners and parents alike. Thus, in many cases the physical needs of schools overshadow teachers' commitment to serve the learners they teach, particularly learners orphaned and made vulnerable owing to HIV and AIDS.

#### **2.5.3.5.2 Neighbourhood capacities**

Local neighbourhood associations and organisations are central to the survival of the school. These may be formal or informal and could include cultural groups, faith-based organisations, small businesses, support groups and recreation centres. Mourad and Ways (1998) contend that an asset-building initiative must reintegrate the resources of such entrepreneurs into the community development activities. In most cases the depth and extent of associational life in any community is vastly underestimated (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This is particularly

true in 'poor' communities, however, these groups are indispensable tools for development and many of them can in fact be stretched beyond their capacities and intentions to become full contributors to the welfare of OVC (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

The key questions to ask may include: what associations are located within the school boundaries? Does the school have connections to these associations and how can they be approached in order to help the schools in terms of providing both material and or financial assistance particularly to OVC. SMTs should be in a position to network with the local associations and other institutions in terms of local investments.

Recent research by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007) showed that a number of teachers use their salary in a community where many are unemployed, to provide financial assistance to OVC, paying their school fees and providing them with school uniforms and food. Also some innovative schools had started asking more affluent community members for example to 'adopt' an orphan, paying his/her school fees and providing a child with school uniforms. Although both cases show the use of the school's knowledge and status in the community to respond to issues of OVC, there is paucity of research on how the SMTs draw on the available resources, organize and use those resources to respond to OVC due to HIV and AIDS in their school context.

#### **2.5.3.5.3 Institutional capacities**

In addition to the individual and local association capacities that make up the asset base on which the school can draw, there are more formal institutions, i.e. the public sectors such as the hospitals, police stations, media, national corporations and non-governmental organisations. These organisations make up the most visible and formal part of the community, including schools' functioning as a safe place for *all* learners (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). For instance, the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions (Department of Social Development, 2004) is becoming increasingly involved in school development by issuing birth certificates to identified orphaned and other vulnerable children so that they can get social grants.

In terms of South Africa, schools serving poor communities, particularly those affected by HIV and AIDS should make a concerted effort to mobilise institutions and businesses to support schools in relation to OVC. In the study undertaken by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007) there is

evidence that in some schools some success have been achieved. They explain that many teachers asked nurses, doctors and law enforcement agencies to speak to the learners on issues of health and crime and social grants. What was noted in their study was individual support by passionate and sensitive teachers. My study therefore will explore how SMTs respond to the issue of OVC by drawing on school, church, businesses and other institutions in the community to support the learning and development of OVC in their school context.

#### **2.5.4 The theories that guide my study**

The explanation of theories is an attempt to offer a framework to understand the study. Two existing theories have been presented as the theoretical framework and will be used to explain how SMTs address OVC.

The ecosystemic perspective developed by Donald et al. (1997) is the dominant theory that frames the study, particularly the systems theory. The emphasis is on understanding the SMTs and their supportive development of children orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS, in the school context, but also as part of the greater ecosystem. The ecosystemic perspective as advocated by Donald et al. (1997) emphasise that all levels of the system should be seen as constantly developing and interacting with one another. In general, when expectations at school, home and within the community reinforce one another, the child's development is optimized (Mohangi, 2003). The ultimate impact of the school, teachers, peers, associations and local institutions depends not only on the characteristics of each but also of the strengths and capacities among settings. The capacities are mobilised and are established as effective partnerships so that OVC can be protected and nurtured both directly, as in the case of the school, and indirectly, as through other resources or assets available to the school.

The asset-based approach, as developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), serves as the second theoretical framework. As discussed above, the asset-based approach clearly directs attention to the fact that support is possible and can be sustained if it starts from within.

The point of departure in this study is that the combined influence of community, family, society, schools and individuals can alleviate the impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and the rising tide of OVC. However, the national and political promises of poverty reduction and education for *all* learners, which are supported from outside the country have possibly established a cycle of

dependence. As a result, pathological behaviour, where people are seen as ‘needy’, is therefore the direct response to unfavourable conditions in communities, particularly ‘poor’ communities, weakening individual, school and community values.

The discussion of asset-based school development in response to OVC is intended to affirm, acknowledge and embrace the assets, gifts and capacities of schools situated in ‘poor’ communities. However, as Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) explain, focusing on the assets of lower income communities, does not imply that those communities do not need additional resources from outside. Rather, schools should define their own agendas for which additional resources must be obtained. This strong internal focus is intended simply to stress the creativity, hope and control of communities’ own challenges and resources to solve those problems (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). An important implication of an asset-based approach as advocated by Kretzman and McKnight (1993) is that effective leadership should be devised to mobilise and build the assets and also strengthen relationships. In the light of this, this study aims to understand how SMTs, in rural schools of KwaZulu-Natal, respond to issues of OVC by drawing on assets available to the school.

## **2.5.5 CONCLUSION**

South African society consists of a varied composition and a blend of ethnicities and cultural systems which possess differing perceptions of orphanhood and vulnerability. These cultural divergences were deliberately not explored as it was not the intention of this study to investigate aspects of cultural diversity regarding orphanhood and vulnerability. The endemic nature of HIV and AIDS that pervades the democratic schooling system in South Africa is however a common feature of most schools in the country irrespective of cultural and ethnic diversity.

The threat and reality of HIV and AIDS in the school system promises to challenge and accelerate change in schools and education to transform schools into ‘centres of care and support’ of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2004). Still being debated are firstly, the methods of utilizing and mobilising resources in the so called ‘poor’ communities regardless of the state of the epidemic in those communities, and secondly, the specific roles of schools and school management including their capacity to deal with HIV and AIDS both themselves and their learners.

The review of the asset-based approach reveals that there are still opportunities for schools, particularly those in poor communities to solve their problems and emphasize the benefits of implementing a dynamic style of school leadership.

Changing schools to become intentionally ‘centres of care and support’ for the sake of creating favourable conditions for OVC means developing collaborative school cultures that calls for effective leadership. In their discussion of elements of an asset-based approach Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a) describe a successful leader as a person with ability to attract resources and support. This means that primary assets will be situated in the domains of intra- and inter-personal gifts and capacities.

It is therefore argued that effective school management must include a deep understanding of the school as an organisation and its place in the school community and the life of individuals it serves. Given the aforementioned principles of asset-based approach within an ecosystemic perspective, there is adequate evidence that they may be utilized as suitable fundamentals to form part of the strategy of SMTs to respond to OVC.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

*“Fighting the HIV and AIDS pandemic is not a part-time assignment, but a full-time mandate until the situation stabilizes. Ministries and agencies must anticipate its consequences, and harness resources to counteract it.”*

(SADC Human Resources Development Sector, 2001).

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter Two I set out the theoretical framework of the study, i.e. the ecosystemic and asset-based approaches. This chapter presents a comprehensive explanation of the research design, the strategies utilized during the data production and data analysis to explore SMTs’ response to children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in their school context.

#### **3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

HIV and AIDS slowly unravel the delicate web of relationships that children need in order to develop. Perhaps the most insidious aspect of HIV and AIDS is the capacity of the disease to split those human bonds and social ties that children need to survive and thrive (Cook & Du Toit, 2005). Across Southern Africa, and now particularly in the South Africa schooling system, we are witnessing not only the mortality of HIV and AIDS but also the responsibility of caring for OVC. The role of local communities and schools in finding responsive and innovative ways of rebuilding and reweaving child-centred webs of relationships is therefore critical and needs to be explored and researched. Of particular importance is the need to identify and build on local capacities in partnership with educators, families, learners as well as the communities. This study is aimed at acquiring information about SMTs’ response to children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in their school context.

The research questions can be formulated as follows:

- How do the SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?
- What available resources do the SMT members draw upon to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?

### **3.3 RESEARCH AIMS**

The aims of the research is therefore to explore how the SMTs respond to OVC, as well as to identify what resources the SMTs draw on to respond to OVC in the rural South African schooling system.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive and interpretive approach (Mouton, 1996) to explore how SMTs respond to challenges facing learners who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in their school context.

#### **3.4.2 The qualitative research approach**

This study is a qualitative study designed to elicit data pertaining to how SMTs respond to issues of OVC in their school context. Merriam (1998) suggests that a qualitative study assumes numerous contextual realities, that is, identifying the world as a highly subjective phenomenon and a function of personal interaction and perception. In qualitative research, the researcher tries to understand a particular social situation or event through on-going interaction. Creswell (1994) suggests that this entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting. The decision to utilize this particular research design was, amongst other pertinent considerations based on the following:

- Events can only be adequately understood if they are seen in context, that is, a qualitative researcher collects words (text) and images (pictures) about the central phenomenon.



- The data are collected from people immersed in the setting of everyday life in which the study is framed.
- The qualitative researcher gathers detailed information through multiple, usually interactive methods. As Creswell (1994, p.145) explains, “data are mediated through human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires or machines.”
- Qualitative research attends to the experience as a whole, not as separate variables. The unit of analysis is also holistic, concentrating on the relationship between elements and contexts (De Vos, Strydom, Fouch, & Delport, 2005). The aim of the research is therefore to understand a unified experience. The whole is always more than the sum.
- The whole process of qualitative research is to construct a detailed description of social reality.

The qualitative research approach is hereby closely linked to and compatible with the ecosystemic framework appointed in conducting the study. Qualitative research adopts a holistic approach whereby the assumption exists that the context is critical and essential for understanding a particular situation. This further allows for evaluating circumstances from the perspective of participants in the situation and conceptualizing individuals as active agents in constructing and making sense of realities that they encounter (Ferreira, 1990).

### **3.4.3 The interpretivist paradigm**

The compositional structure of the design therefore, is anchored in and guided by the *interpretivist paradigm*. Babbie (2004) describe the interpretive paradigm as being primarily directed towards understanding: gaining meaning and understanding of individuals of their own interpretations. The emphasis is on interpretive understanding (Verstehen) rather than explanation in terms of universally valid laws (Babbie, 2004).

In other words, in an interpretive paradigm, knowledge is perceived as socially constructed, thus meanings and interpretation are negotiated with human data sources. I considered the meaning of the SMTs’ roles as processes and lived experiences. The accurate description of how SMTs respond to issues of OVC constitutes knowledge to be gained inductively. This is in line with Maree (2007) and Winberg’s (1997) definition of the interpretive research paradigm as providing

insight into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or phenomena they encounter in their social interaction.

#### **3.4.4 Phenomenological study**

The research strategy utilized is that of phenomenology. I should at the outset describe what I mean by phenomenological research more carefully. The kind of research I am referring to is what Schweitzer (2002, p.1) describes as “what’s it like for them” type of studies. As De Vos et al. (2005) explain, a phenomenological study attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation. It allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurs.

This essentially constructivist element has significant implications, chief of which is the fact that the research participants’ embeddedness in cultural, political and historical contexts is an integral component of the enquiry. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the phenomenological approach is the fact that it focuses on describing the essence of the subjective experience. In Tesch’s (1990, p. 65) words, phenomenology as a strategy refers to “mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people, experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand various aspects of, and phenomenon in the world around them.” In other words, the value of a phenomenological approach is measured by its powers to let us understand ourselves, and understand the lives of those for whom we bear pedagogical responsibility (Tesch, 1990). I regard the phenomenological approach as suitable for my study, as I view the SMTs as the experts who hold the key to understanding and insight into the ways of responding to issues of OVC. In other words, the phenomenological approach allows the SMTs’ experiences to speak for themselves; which I as researcher try to understand as the essential structure of the lived experiences of the research participants. When trying to distinguish the phenomenological approach from other qualitative approaches such as case study and participatory research, also broadly situated in an interpretive orientation, it is useful to focus on its unique features. Of these, the most significant according to O’Donoghue and Punch (2003) are:

- **Essence:** the focus is on the core meaning of an individual experience (what is essential/necessary not secondary).

- **Bracketing/epoche:** this is seen to be the essential attitude of the phenomenologist. This refers to the suspension of beliefs so that the phenomenon can be fully focused upon and understood. For the *epoche* to take place, ‘natural’ attitudes must be bracketed or suspended, taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions about the phenomenon temporarily suspended (O’Donoghue & Punch, 2003). It is however notable that, humanly, it is not possible to be completely unbiased and to bracket one’s own natural attitude, but by being more aware of this process, it is possible to try to control it (O’Donoghue & Punch, 2003).
- An acknowledgement that research participants’ ‘reality’ is not directly accessible to the researcher, and that the researcher’s focus is on neither the phenomenon nor participants, but rather on the ‘dialogue’ of individuals with their contexts. McConville (1978, p.103) contends that the “dialectical organisation of experiencing-behaving subject and physical social world which essentially defines the phenomenon in question” become the focus of the researcher.
- The focus is on ‘lived experience’, the world we experience in everyday living (as the primary task of phenomenology). Related to the lived-world is the concept “horizon” which refers to the context in which one experiences things, people or feelings (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). The implication is that any research phenomenon needs to be understood within its particular horizon context.
- An insistence on description, rather than interpretation; while there is a thin and even contestable line between these (description and interpretation) the drive to stay with description until a holistic picture of the issue emerges is fundamental to a phenomenological approach (Van der Mescht, 2004). It embraces the notion of bracketing and works against the tendency to make early judgment calls based on pre-conceived notions.

With these guidelines in place, I found the phenomenological approach useful, given the aims of this study, because it offers descriptive, reflective and engagement modes of inquiry on how the SMTs in two rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal respond to issues of OVC.

The qualitative approach used in this study was therefore a defined process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur. Typically, qualitative methods produce a wealth of comprehensive and multifaceted information. Attempts to describe these occurrences, and

determine the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, require inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning helps to derive explanations based on the observed phenomena (Tesch, 1990). Due to the nature of qualitative research whereby experiences of a phenomenon such as responses to OVC in two rural secondary schools are explored and recorded by the researcher for further analysis, the critical aspect of trustworthiness was required. This involves dependability, credibility, neutrality and fairness of procedure and process.

### **3.4.5 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers have no single stance or consensus on addressing traditional topics such as validity and reliability in qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss establishing quality criteria such as ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ as viable stances on the question of validity and reliability. The epistemological assumption of qualitative research is based on minimizing the distance between the researcher and the informants (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). Trustworthiness is hereby viewed by Creswell (1994) as more than just a set of procedures but rather involves a personal belief that shapes the procedures in process. With this in mind, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) strategy to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research was therefore applied, which ensured rigour of the qualitative investigation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that qualitative researchers establish the trustworthiness of their findings by demonstrating that they are credible, dependable, confirmable and transferable. How these four criteria were applied in this study are outlined below.

- **Credibility**

This aspect ascertains whether the researcher’s conclusions stem from the data. Maree (2007) asserts that the researcher strives to produce findings that are believable and convincing. That is, credibility is established if participants agree with the constructions and interpretations of the researcher. Several strategies to enhance credibility in research include these:

- Data-gathering procedure are explained
- Data are presented transparently

- Negative instances are reported (no exaggeration) “presenting negative or inconsistent findings add to the credibility of the study” (Maree, 2007, p. 297).
- Biases are acknowledged
- The relationship between claims and supporting evidence is clearly expressed and procedures are used to check the quality of the research.

In order to establish credibility of the study, I first visited the school in order to familiarise myself with the school environment. Miles and Huberman (1984) also suggest that good qualitative research includes familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study. Other key notions I used to ensure credibility included field notes, the use of audio tape recording during data collection, and my supervisor acting as an independent co-coder. Findings and analysis were also discussed with my supervisor to have a coherent set of findings linked with the theory and the literature reviewed.

Furthermore, in the second phase of data collection, preliminary findings were submitted and discussed with the participants in order to restrain the possibilities of my imposing my own ideas on the data. Asking participants to check how their own comments have been interpreted is also commonly used to advance credibility (Conrad & Serlin, 2006; Morse & Richards, 2002). I have accordingly referenced all the sources used in this study and included the annexures of transcripts and interview guides used during the data collection.

### • **Dependability**

This is the alternative to reliability in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study. The positivist notion of reliability assumes an unchanging world and the consistency of data related to whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same participants or in similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This assumption of an unchanging world is in contrast to the qualitative assumption that the social world is always being constructed (De Vos et al., 2005). Similarly, Conrad and Serlin (2006, p. 416) state that “there is no unchanging universe where pure replication is possible and desirable.” For this reason, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that

consistency in respect of qualitative research is defined as dependability, whereby variability can be ‘traced’ down and ascribed to the identified sources.

In order to establish dependability, I ensured that the study includes clear research questions, an explicit explanation of the research design and analysis based on Tesch’s (1990) analytical procedures. Over and above, I took cognisance of the ethical concerns in qualitative research (De Vos et al., 2005), obtaining ethical clearance from the university and informed consent from the schools and all the participants. I maintained anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study and the reporting of the findings. I therefore used pseudonyms such as School A and School B when referring to the schools which participated in this study.

- **Confirmability**

This refers to the degree to which the findings and conclusions depend on the participants more than on the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that findings should reflect the participants and inquiry itself and not a ‘fabrication’ from the biases and prejudices of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress the need to ask whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another. By so doing, they remove evaluation from the researcher’s inherent characteristics, biases, motivation and pre-conceived ideas and place the findings “squarely” on the data themselves (De Vos et al., 2005, p.347).

Miles and Huberman (1984) conclude that confirmability is relative neutrality – thus the researcher should adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon under scrutiny. Again, drawing on Lincoln and Guba (1985), in essence confirmability depends on:

- Having a ‘devil’s advocate’ to critically question one’s interpretation
- Developing themes and to search for negative instances and alternative instances
- Developing a second set of ‘judgment-free’ notes before developing categories
- Conducting an audit of data collection and analysis strategies

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend creating an audit trail, one that would allow an external auditor to examine both the processes and products of the study. Consequently, for the duration of this study, I tried to adopt a neutral outlook and executed analysis without a predisposition to

manipulate data. Tailoring checks on the trustworthiness in this study, I ensured that the presentation and the discussion of the findings reflect the participants' description of the phenomenon explored in the study. Techniques in doing so included spending time reading the transcriptions made from the audio tape recordings and matching patterns by considering conclusion in terms of predictions from the theory and the relevant literature studied (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). Once again, in order to diminish my biasness, I had a discussion about analysis with my supervisor and findings of the research were finalised thereafter.

- **Transferability**

The final construct, transferability, captures the traditional concept of generalisability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose this as the alternative to external validity or generalisability, in which the findings and conclusions made from data and context of the research, may apply to a wider population and settings. As this study involved qualitative research conducted in a natural setting, with a minimal degree of controlling variables, the capacity to generalize was therefore irrelevant, as each situation is unique in terms of participants, age, context and mood, and was thus less open to generalisation.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the only way in which to establish transferability is to create a 'thick description', that is, providing sufficiently dense description of the findings such that the reader can assess the transferability of the case and apply it to his/her own circumstance. They also underscore the importance of using a theoretical framework to organize data and demonstrating how data analysis will be guided by concepts or certain models. Accordingly, it is necessary to include a complete description of the methodology including the literature related to the phenomenon being studied.

In the context of this study, the distinguishing characteristics of transferability were addressed through the process of sample selection, whereby the participants were purposely selected. I discussed the literature in relation to OVC, particularly to the schools' response to these children. Specific policies which set guidelines for schools to address issues of OVC also formed part of the literature. Subsequently the theoretical frameworks, i.e. the ecosystemic and asset-based approaches, were sufficiently described as well as the ways in which data were guided by these theories (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). Furthermore, a dense description of the findings has been

provided, with verbatim quotes from the participants. Finally, I have provided a statement as to how the findings could be explored further. Miles and Huberman (1994) add that the extent to which others can apply the conclusions, implications and recommendations of a study is also a measure of its transferability. I therefore deliberately provided detailed information on the methodology, literature review, analysis and findings to aid the reader in ascertaining whether the study could be similar enough to be relevant to his/her own circumstance.

## **3.5 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.5.1 Introduction**

This qualitative study ultimately examines how SMTs respond to the issue of learners who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in two rural secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It also sought to understand what resources (especially local and immediate) the SMTs draw on to respond to the issues of OVC in their school.

### **3.5.2 The school context**

The most profound effects of HIV and AIDS are concentrated on education. South Africa not only has the largest number of HIV-positive people in the world, between 6.29 and 6.51 million, but also the largest number of AIDS orphans, namely 2.3 million, a figure which is expected to rise to 3.1 million by 2010 (UNAIDS, 2004a). The education sector therefore faces a challenge in terms of the survival and continuity of such children (Badcock-Walters, 2001). Schools, particularly school principals and heads of departments (who are supposed to form the backbone of the school leadership system), face a task of providing quality education to increasingly ill and disrupted learners and AIDS orphans who are often not able to benefit from education because of their dismal living conditions (Buchel & Hoberg, 2006).

This study was conducted in two schools in a rural district in KwaZulu-Natal. The two schools are participating in a project of the Faculty of Education Research Niche Area 'Every Voice Counts: rural teacher development in the age of AIDS'. Within this project, one area focuses on school management where I aimed to explore how the SMTs address barriers to learning among OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS. The second objective is to develop and manage



sustainable interventions that address those barriers to learning and development (De Lange et al., 2006).

### **3.5.2.1 Brief description of the sampled schools**

The two schools which were the principal source of information are located in the Vulindlela district in KwaZulu-Natal. Vulindlela lies 150 kilometres north west of Durban. The HIV prevalence in KZN was found to be 39.1% and Vulindlela has the highest percentage in the province at 37% (Abdool-Karim, 2006).

#### **School A**

This is a public school under the governance of the SGB and SMT. Presently the SMT is composed of the principal and the deputy principal (both are males). The school used to enrol many learners over the past years, e.g. in 2002 they had around 1000 learners, however, this number has gradually decreased. Due to this decline, there are no heads of departments as constituted by the Post Provisional Norm (PPN) (DoE, 2002) regulation in South Africa. According to the school statistics there were 216 learners who were identified as vulnerable; of these 74 were maternal orphans, 87 paternal orphans, and 55 had lost both parents. The school has its own armed security guard, is fenced, and gates are locked at all times. There is no electricity and the rooms are a bit dim, perhaps not unlike home room in a rural area. Educators' salaries and all school materials are provided by the state and the Ministry of Education appoints the educators.

#### **School B**

School B is located about 8 kilometres from School A. As at School A, the school is governed by the SGB and SMT. The SMT is composed of the principal (male), deputy principal (female) and four heads of department (all females). Three heads of departments have been trained in HIV and AIDS. The school enrolls many learners and this number increases every year. In 2007, there were around 855, in 2008, 895. According to the needs assessment list compiled in 2006, 156 learners were said to be 'needy'. The statistics of how many were orphaned were not available when I was collecting data. The school buildings are in a good condition and have a veranda. There is electricity. The state provides the same support as at School A.

It emerges from this brief description of the sampled schools that they are of different status. The reason for choosing rural secondary schools is because the statistics indicate a high HIV and AIDS prevalence in rural KwaZulu-Natal (CAPRISA, 2006). Schools in the rural province of KZN are therefore also hit hard as AIDS-related morbidity and mortality have an overwhelming impact in the rural areas (MacQueen & Abdool-Karim, 2007). I focused on the activities of the SMTs of two rural schools in relation to supporting and responding to issues of OVC.

### **3.5.3 The sample**

Selection of participants was intentionally limited to the SMT members from two senior secondary schools in the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **3.5.3.1 Brief description of sampled population**

According to Buchel and Hoberg (2006) the most profound effects of HIV and AIDS are concentrated in education and that the quality of education is threatened. Principals and school management teams are faced with a task of providing quality education to increasingly ill and disrupted learners and AIDS orphans. The data of this study came from members of SMT from two rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal. They included: the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments, of whom three were also Life Orientation educators. These participants were purposively sampled in order to acquire in-depth responses regarding their leadership role of responding to issues of OVC in their school context.

This sampling strategy is deemed suitable by De Vos et al. (2007) and according to Maree (2007), purposive sampling allows for the desired group as key informants to provide rich and in-depth information. This sample of participants is indicated in Table 3.1.

<b>School</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Length of service</b>	<b>Training in HIV/AIDS</b>
A	Principal	Male	4	No
A	Deputy Principal	Male	5	No
B	Principal	Male	12	No
B	Deputy Principal	Female	12	No
B	Head of Department 1	Female	12	No
B	Head of Department 2	Female	12	Yes
B	Head of Department 3	Female	12	Yes
B	Head of Department 4	Female	10	Yes

**Table 3.1: Participating SMT members**

The two schools that were the main data sources, are located in a rural district in KwaZulu-Natal and are both senior secondary public schools, governed by a School Governing Body (SGB) and a School Management Team (SMT). The SMTs consist of the principals, deputy principals and head of departments. Five members were female and three were males. The length of their service ranged from 4 to 12 years and only three had some training in HIV and AIDS, as shown in Table 3.1.

### **3.5.4 Data collection process**

#### **3.5.4.1 Focus group interviews**

Once the necessary permission was acquired, the SMT members were approached to participate in the study. All participants were assured complete confidentiality and encouraged to disclose as much valuable information as they possibly could.

The first focus group interviews took place at the individual schools, exploring the SMT's response to OVC. Focus group interviews direct discussion among a group of people, fewer than 12, with the purpose of collecting in-depth qualitative data about a group perception, attitudes and experiences on a defined topic (Maree, 2007). Furthermore, as Maree (2007) indicates, the goal was to encourage full participation and interaction among members and also

to probe for clarity of aspects. A focus group interview guide was utilized for the SMTs at the two schools. The guiding questions were aimed at eliciting information about:

- realities of OVC and school communities;
- knowledge on the part of SMTs regarding the prevalence of OVC in their school context;
- perception on the part of SMTs regarding their leadership role in responding to issues of OVC in their school, the dynamics of successful responses to OVC, why and how the SMTs address the issue, and the actual challenges raised by HIV and AIDS-related issues including orphanhood and vulnerability in the school context;
- knowledge on the part of the SMTs regarding the application of appropriate legislation and policies when dealing with issues relating to OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS.

This interview guide served as a framework for the focus group discussion. The interview guide was logical and proceeded in a sequence that I had ordered. The first question was to put the participants at ease, and I then progressed to the main research focus group interview questions (Appendix A). The ending session in a focus group, as Maree (2007) postulates, is a more general wrap-up where the researcher summarizes the prominent points that emerged from the interaction and verifies her understanding of these points.

Though the interview guiding was specific, the open-ended questions allowed participants to raise issues pertinent to their way of responding to OVC that were not raised by me. In addition, the focus group interview provided valuable information on how they talk about a topic and how they respond in a situation where they are exposed to the views of and experiences of others (Maree, 2007). As a result, the SMTs could respond to the questions in terms of what they saw as significant. The interviews, lasting 90 minutes, were audio-taped and transcribed.

### **3.5.3.2 Arts-based focus group interview ‘collage’**

According to Maree (2007), a focus group interview encourages debate and even conflict, and group dynamics assist in data generation. Participants engage in a discussion with each other rather than directing their comments solely to the researcher. De Vos et al. (2007) also noted that in focus group interviews, participants are able to build on each other’s ideas and comments

to provide in-depth information not attainable from an individual interview. In this study, to complement the first focus group interview done with both SMTs at their respective schools, the second phase of the data collection involved bringing together the SMTs from the two schools in a neutral place. To answer the research question “What available resources do SMTs draw on to respond to OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS?” participants had to make a collage.

Collage is a formal work of art that involves creating a work from pictures, and may also include words and photographs. Cutting pictures and words out of the magazines, the SMT members illustrated what available resources could be mobilised in order to respond to issues of OVC. The nature of the collage activity itself presented a challenge to SMT members, therefore, before the activity began, I explained the process and provided a ready-made example of a collage.

The process (also see Appendix B) consisted of these elements:

- Getting together and introducing ourselves (name tags were given)
- I explained the purpose of the gathering
- Participants signed consent forms to voluntarily participate in the study
- As a prompt I read two case studies to the SMTs and showed them some statistics from the research on the issues of OVC by Cluver, Gardner and Operiori (2007); Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007) and UNAIDS (2000); and asked the following questions:

“Do you agree with these case studies and the statistics, is this a reality in your school?”

“In trying to address issues of OVC in your schools, what available resources do you drawn on? Make a collage to represent your responses.”

- Cutting, writing and discussing
- Wrapping up by talking about their collage
- All audio taped and video taped.

During the collage and throughout the discussion they were asked to be precise and practical as to how they think they will respond to the issues of OVC in their school context. In other words,

the choice of what pictures/words to put into the collage was not just ‘a cut and paste’ work, rather there had to be relevance to what is considered to be helpful resources in trying to respond to challenges facing the schools in relation to OVC.

The original time allocation of three hours for the whole session and one hour to create the collage proved to be inadequate for the SMTs. They did not go straight into making a collage, but were engaged in thinking, sharing ideas, suggesting, questioning and explaining to each other about the choice of pictures and words they wanted to put into the collage. The exercise therefore provided an opportunity for the participants to share directly their reality and capture it visually (Creswell, 1994).

The phenomenon of OVC and its manifestation represented a mutual concern. Trust between the SMT members from the two schools through the formation of an interview setting was established (Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit, 2004). Bringing the SMTs from the two schools together assisted in creating a companionable experience and enabled SMT members to share information and give advice and a new hope to work collaboratively to respond to learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

In a way to capture the data during creation of the collage, the participants were furthermore reassured that the audio-taped information would be used for research purposes only and that their anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed. Audio recordings provide detailed recorded talk and direction when listening and transcribing, which field notes alone cannot provide (Henning et al., 2004).

### **3.5.5 Data analysis**

Henning et al. (2004, p. 6) state that the data analysis in qualitative research is an “ongoing and iterative non-linear process.” Data analysis incorporates personal control and responsibility and thorough transcription of text, taking words apart, sentences and paragraphs in order to make sense of, interpret and theorise that data, (Henning et al., 2004). Bearing this qualitative ideology in mind, I employed a descriptive analysis technique outlined by Tesch (1990) to generate categories and themes in response to the first research question.

- I commenced with reading all the data/interview transcriptions, writing down notes and comments when necessary;
- The thickest and richest interview was selected and I recorded assumptions and perceptions in the margin;
- Data segments of similar topics were then clustered together, to define conceptual similarities and discover patterns;
- These topics were subsequently abbreviated as codes and then attributed descriptive headings and converted into categories. The list of categories was reduced by grouping corresponding topics under compatible headings;
- Each category was then abbreviated and assigned a particular code;
- The data material relating to each category was assembled and preliminary analysis was performed; generating themes.

Applying a rigid and structured analysis approach is of vital importance. This is time consuming and critical to the research process of identifying substantive connections which make meaning in the area of the study.

I then looked at all the data, categories and the themes to create a map of assets. In this, I grouped them into three categories as advocated by Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a, p.26): closer community assets, assets of local institutions and assets of a wider social system. (See Figure 4.3)

### **3.5.6 Recontextualisation and literature control**

Subsequent to this analytical procedure, I constantly moved between the existing theory and literature in order to deliver the insights from the data in the context of established and reputable knowledge (Maree, 2007). This is to find those aspects in the data that corroborate literature and/or that claim unique contributions to the specific realm of the research. The literature control consequently brings multiple perspectives, similarities and differences that serve to recontextualise the findings.

### **3.5.7 Ethical considerations**

In qualitative research Maree (2007) asserts that the researcher should produce an ethical research design. This does not only imply that data generation and analysis be performed thoughtfully, but also that procedures are kept that can be used to assess the trustworthiness constantly in mind. In an attempt to minimize bias results, and with awareness of the potential controversy regarding SMTs' response to OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS, the following ethical considerations were applied and maintained effectively. For instance:

- application for research clearance from the Department of Education was obtained prior to undertaking the research. (Appendix D)
- ethical clearance approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal was acquired. (Appendix C)
- signed consent forms were received from participants: principals, deputy principals and heads of the departments. (Appendices D and E)
- ethical and moral concerns such as confidentiality and anonymity as previously outlined were consistently monitored and maintained
- participants were consistently made aware of every step, process and practice they were involved in.

## **3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

I do not claim that this study is exhaustive, and present some limitations linked to the sample size, language and the use of a collage in data collection.

### **3.6.1 Sample size**

The study is limited to SMT members from two senior secondary schools in a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal. The absence of both the principals during data collection has been a limitation, yet the willingness and availability of the other members provided opportunity for in-depth discussions.



### **3.6.2 Language**

Although all the participants could effortlessly converse in English, they sometimes used their own mother tongue (isiZulu) and therefore a translator was required. During subsequent interviews participants were asked to verify the data gathered and translated in earlier interviews. This was also done during an informal conversation with participants to verify whether my interpretation of what has been shared was correct.

### **3.6.3 Data collection technique (collage)**

There were a number of issues and concerns that came up during data collection. The original time allocation of one hour to create a collage proved to be inadequate for the task. The participants talked quietly about what pictures to select from the magazines, and took more time for discussion than the collage activity itself. However, the purpose was to use the collage activity as a way to open up the discussion.

## **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter covered the strategies that I undertook to complete the study. The chapter further identified the appropriateness and positive aspects of utilizing a qualitative approach. The methodological strategy, and the data collection and analysis procedures were discussed in detail. Moreover, the limitations of the study have been presented to ensure credibility. Chapter Four will present the results of the study and emphasize how SMTs respond to issues of OVC in their school context. The prevalent themes which emerged from the responses from the participants will be discussed in relation to the South African context and literature review.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

*Organization spring from the will and imagination of people; they are not “natural” products, like trees and mountains. This radical subjective view stresses the power of the individual (the creator of the system) to un-make or re-create that same system. Within this framework Greenfield argued that we must talk about the meanings that bind all participants together in the social setting. We see schools and organization generally as cultural artifacts, as products of human imagination bearing the imprint of individual men and women.*

(Greenfield, 1984)

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study. The essence of the SMTs’ responses is described in specific themes as they emerged from my analysis of the transcribed data. The findings are presented with direct quotations from the voices of the participants, and are integrated with literature that was discussed in Chapter Two and contextualised within Southern Africa.

#### 4.2 RESULTS

In response to the first research question, **How do the SMTs respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?**, the thematic analysis of the focus group interview data revealed three specific themes which were identified based on their appropriateness to the study and commonality of perception between the participants (Tesch, 1990). (See Figure 4.1)

In response to the second research question, **What available resources do the SMT members draw upon to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?**, an analysis of the assets they drew upon and intend accessing in future, emerged. This analysis is presented in an asset-map of their way forward. (See Figure 4.3)

- Underestimating their own individual contribution
- Uncoordinated efforts
- Engagement with departmental policies

**Figure 4.1: SMTs responses to addressing the issues of OVC**

## **4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

In this part of the chapter, I will attempt first to discuss the three themes which emerged from the inductive data analysis of the SMTs focus group interviews at their respective schools. Secondly, I will discuss the asset-map of the assets which emerged when the two SMTs in their shared arts-based focus group, responded to the second research question.

### **4.3.1 Themes**

#### **4.3.1.1 Underestimating their own individual contribution**

Upon the examination of the responses, it was particularly apparent that the care and support activities that dominate at school level had been socialised into a ‘culture’ and system of ‘ubuntu’. In this regard, several participants were able to provide adequate explanations of the kind of care and support they provided for OVC. This is a reality that is likely to continue, yet it is important to note that SMT members were struggling to realize the value and impact of their efforts. The form of care and support by the SMT members seem to flow organically from their culture of ‘ubuntu’ as was expressed by the following participant:

*“The former deputy principal would for the rest of her life in the school come with extra sandwiches for a particular learner’s family and everyday after school the learner will come and collect the food parcels from the school clerk.”*

*“...sometimes when I am eating, maybe I will eat half and then leave for the boy in grade 12, because I’ve been to his home at one stage and I know the situation.”*

*“Some teacher, I remember, last year he bought some shoes for a particular boy and I remember I did the same as well. One day I took my shoes and I gave to one grade 12 boy because I could see that he was wearing very torn shoes.”*

*“Some teachers buy them uniform, some of the teachers will even go as far as even paying the school fees.”*

*‘There was once a lady, she is no longer in this school, but even now she will still visit a particular learner and has referred the learner to some of her church members, who are now supporting the boy.’*

The tendency to share what you have appeared, therefore, to be inextricably linked to a cultural and societal custom that has been entrenched in the southern African context.

Ansell and Young (2004) indicate that most southern African orphans are cared by the extended families, however, due to the growing number of OVC due to HIV and AIDS, the responsibility of caring for the children pushes many extended families beyond their ability to cope financially. Schools are places where all children should be protected and nurtured, and have now have to take up fulfilling their basic needs. Extreme conditions exist for OVC (Drew, Makufa & Foster; Kelly, 2001; Operario, Cluver, Rees, MacPhail, & Pettifor, 2008; UNAIDS, UNICEF & USAID, 2004) and the complexities of these issues make it difficult for the school to effectively provide sufficient support to its learners. In this study, the following participant verbalized his apprehension and helplessness regarding the school’s response to OVC:

*“...there are those who have cases that are too serious, who have nothing to eat at home, these kids come to school hungry...I think this year I nearly resigned because I said to myself, what are we doing at our school...?”*

Activities related to care and support of OVC are becoming more critical in the schools as the number of children who are orphaned, care for their ill parents and/ or care for their siblings (Kartell & Chabilall, 2005) is increasing. Care and support activities encompass an extensive range of activities including creating a supportive and enabling environment in schools. In this respect, one participant expressed her concern regarding no or inadequate support for OVC in their school:

*“...it is disheartening to know that in our environment at this school there are cases of OVC and that there is nothing done to address them.”*

These responses raise the fact that the school environment is important in ensuring that OVC have access to knowledge, services and a safe environment. The SMT members felt that the schools were not doing enough to provide care and support for OVC. However, the many individual responses by the participants, show that organised formal care and support activities at the school are non-existent.

The concept health promoting school presents new views about schools and confirm the idea that schools should function as centres of care and support for all learners including learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2001b; Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Sayson & Meya, 2001). Anecdotal records (DoE, 1996, 2000a; UNESCO, 2006b) of the school as the locus for care and support of OVC emphasise the need for identification and mobilisation of assets in the school in a systematic way, rather than merely as individual responses. SMTs' elicited responses indicated 'ill' participation of the school to respond to OVC,

*“...there is nothing that I would say the school is actually, practically doing”*

*“...what a concern to me is the fact that, it is like the schools are not doing enough to address issues of OVC...no particular activity except getting into class, teaching and then come out of the class, we turn a blind eye as if they do not exist”*

The SMTs responses to OVC seem to be individualistic as they were moved by compassion. In some instances, the services being provided are ones for which responsibility has not yet been clearly apportioned at the school level.

Social systems such as educational institutions need to be intrinsically involved in negotiating and responding to issues of OVC (Cook & Du Toit, 2005). There are clear opportunities to promote initiatives to benefit orphaned and vulnerable learners in the context of existing efforts, but there is also a need for strengthening school systems to be more focused and to work as a team. Typically, stronger links between the constituents might result in OVC having healthier and more positive relationships. Cook and Du Toit (2005) explain that the relationships, when optimal, have the potential to foster positive self-esteem and powerful identities.

In keeping with Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a); FRESH (2000) and Kamper (2008), mapping of resources need to be done. The concept of an asset-based approach has evolved over the years (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1996) and goes much further than orphanhood and vulnerability. Participants did not discuss this approach in any direct way, but they did emphasise the absolute necessity of placing it at the core of their work. Throughout the discussion, the importance of supporting OVC was highlighted. One participant said,

*“...standing in front of the child, it’s not about me teaching mathematics, it goes beyond that because this is a soul... there are such things that really frustrate and affect our day-to-day running of our work.”*

The need for organised and structured care and support to be a shared responsibility at the school was unquestionable rather than attempting to respond to issues of OVC individually. In this respect, if only one or two individuals respond, they may feel overstretched. One participant viewed his own contribution as insignificant:

*“Let me be honest, there is nothing that the school is doing to address the issue of OVC, it’s only those individuals, who really does not help a lot.”*

In such situations, the importance of SMT in supporting the children and identifying the resources at school is crucial in the case of OVC. Again, the significance of creating partnership and an egalitarian school culture to enable care and support of OVC is of paramount importance (UNESCO, 2008). It is important that the care and support links with any pre-existing support. A key issue which therefore became clear, is that the individual SMT members are providing care and support on an individual and ad hoc basis - not acknowledging the importance of their contribution - in the absence of the SMT’s having a clear coordinated plan to respond to this need. A key challenge for the SMTs may be the lack of coordinating capacity - a strong need for this emerged as a priority for the two SMTs.

#### **4.3.1.2 Uncoordinated efforts**

School Management Team (SMT) members are aware of the challenges of OVC in their school context as has been indicated by their individualistic approach in response to the issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners. However, they also identify a lack of pulling together as a

school community and as such do not seem to optimally respond to the issues of these learners. This is in contrast to one of the five critical priorities for the school, whereby the school community is expected to work together and manage a coherent response to ensure quality education for *all* learners (DoE, 1996). The participants expressed a need to have a plan which transcends the school management and structures which they view would escalate their responses to OVC. This is highlighted in this particular participant's response;

*“There is no plan of some sort to address the issue of orphaned and vulnerable learners”*

It is clear from the participants in this study that to effectively deal with OVC in the school, planning at school level/SMT level must happen. The SMTs need to be clear in their vision (DoE, 1996). Schools which are successful in providing a healthy environment are clear about what they themselves stand for, what their critical issues are and the directions they wish to take. They then can shape appropriate activities to achieve their goal (Rayners, 2007).

The DoE (2003) insists that each school should develop a vision to respond adequately to issues of learners including those orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. According to the World Bank (2002) enhanced leadership capacity is required to respond to OVC. One of the important roles of the SMTs is to create a caring school where educators and learners feel supported and acknowledged. The DoE further states (2003, p. 103) that “principals and SMTs are expected to provide quality education in their school.” Participants' comments about success in responding to issues of OVC provide a ‘patchy’ picture as they noted a lack of cooperation and coordinated activities;

*‘... there is no particular program, that we can say we sat down as the staff, that focuses on addressing issue of OVC.’*

*“... as the school, there is no specific policy that we are actually following to address issues of learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS.”*

The schools provide a range of services, but often do so in specific ways, individually and on a relatively small scale. It is argued by the Centre for AIDS Development Research and Evaluation (CADRE) (2005) that if their actions were coordinated and linked, they could provide

a comprehensive and multi-sectoral OVC program with a robust school community. There is strong need to coordinate the development of initiatives to create services which are integrated.

All the participants in the study agree that a healthy response to OVC require a unique programme which is socially organized, such that the school can develop the capacity amongst all its stakeholders to be able to respond to issues of OVC, also defining roles and responsibilities of the SMTs, other educators and learners. Within the school environment, any programme requires a set of clear goals and activities and an appropriate set of performance indicators to monitor the impact of the various initiatives (UNESCO, 2008). The SMT members' responses seem to view their own response to OVC as not being as effective as it could be if there was a definite programme:

*“...we do not have ways to actually address issues of OVC; we just know that there are so many orphans.”*

*“...in our school we have a long list of learners in need, it ends up being a matter of numbers, but there are no further steps done as the school.”*

Support for children goes beyond access and enrolment if children are to maximize their learning potential (UNESCO, 2006b) and it also implies action-oriented activities. Such actions must encompass implementation of social policies concerning OVC and reducing children's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2000). The schooling system is thus a critical constituent as a socializing agent in the lives of OVC and contains the capacity to draw on available resources to ensure quality education, care and support for OVC (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Skinner et al., 2006b). The SMTs' roles, responsibilities and school ethos are important to adequately respond to OVC. Further, policies and legislation (DoE, 2001a; 2003) imply a profound change in culture and practice of schools in relation to OVC. According to the majority of participants in this study, there is a considerable lack of thorough integration of OVC planning into development plans. Since all the participants in this study indicated the absence of substantive systems or structures at their school, the school provides only a partial support for the immense challenges facing OVC in the school context.



#### 4.3.1.3 Engagement with departmental policies

Schools should act in the best interest of the child and ensure that *all* children access quality education to actualize their full potential (DoE, 2001b; Republic of South Africa, 1996). National policy on HIV and AIDS for learners and educators was promulgated in 1999 to mitigate HIV-related issues including the issues of OVC. Anecdotal records of the perceived rate of OVC due to HIV and AIDS, and a strategic framework of action were documented by Bicego, Rutstein and Johnson (2003), Boler and Carroll (2003), Case, Paxon and Ableidinger (2005), Desmond and Gow (2002), Drew, Makufa and Foster (1998), Hawkins and Catalano (1990), Hunter and Williamson (2001).

This study clearly reveals that these two SMTs, in relation to the national and departmental policies on HIV and AIDS, are unclear on what the National Policy on HIV and AIDS expects them to do or not to do. One participant also declared being unaware of such policies for the school:

*“...there is no specific policy that we are actually following to address issues of OVC, I am not aware of any of such policies...”*

The participants at both schools also stated that the Department of Education requires them to identify and compile a list of learners in need, but were uncertain for what purpose. One participant said;

*“... in the case of our school, it was last year when we were filling some forms from the department, for now it's just a matter of numbers, so nothing is being done about those children.”*

*“...when I was collecting that information, I think I commented and said, this is just what the department does, they will collect information and then they will do nothing...I was worried myself, what are they going to do with that information.”*

This SMT member seems to believe that the department is responsible for care and support of orphaned and vulnerable learners in the school. However, while the school is in no uncertain terms regarded as being responsible for the development and implementation of the National

Policy on HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2001a), in reality the SMT members respond in an uncoordinated way by drawing on their ‘ubuntu’ perspective.

Section 12.1 of the National Policy on HIV and AIDS states that the governing body of a school or the council of an institution may develop and adopt its own implementation plan for HIV and AIDS to give operational effect to the national policy. In the HIV Emergency Guidelines for Educators (DoE, 2000b), the Ministry of Education urges schools to become caring communities. Furthermore, the SMT and particularly the principal, have the final responsibility to ensure the safety of the learners and the quality of its education (DoE, 2003). In other words the SMTs need to be clear in their vision to build a supportive and appreciative environment. Evidence from the responses indicate that SMTs are caught up in an adhoc way of addressing HIV and AIDS-related issues, including issues of OVC in their school context. Concurring with this finding is Van Vollenhoven’s study (2003) regarding the SGB, whose members also pointed out that they were not aware of their functions of putting HIV and AIDS policies in place.

From the data collected in this study, it has become clear that there is a need to put a school policy in place. However, little work has been done to develop feasible school policies to support OVC as this participant’s response indicates:

*“... I remember, at the beginning of this year where we had to formulate our own policy on HIV and AIDS and we never completed.”*

*“...Initially from the SMTs’ meeting we have to come up of with policies so one of those policies was HIV and AIDS...we never completed the whole thing, I remember it was my task.”*

*“... At our school we ask Mondi to deal with it.”*

Despite the initiative of one SMT to come up with an HIV policy, it was not successfully concluded, perhaps owing to a lack of support from all the other educators. The support drawn from a paper industry in the proximity of the school ties in with the HIV and AIDS guidelines for Educators which acknowledge the need for involvement of other stakeholders to participate in developing the school policy (DoE, 2000c).

The above idea emphasized the significance of interactions between the SMT members in developing school policies, which are fundamental for addressing OVC in their school contexts.

Realizing the rising tide of orphaned and vulnerable learners due to AIDS, the Ministry of Education emphasized the need for collaboration, “we recognized that no one could respond to HIV and AIDS alone...the Department of Education has put together guidelines to help SGBs and SMTs to work together to respond to HIV and AIDS” (DoE, 2003, p.5).

Educators’ responsibilities seem to be stretched beyond their daily routines and practices. A baseline survey in Botswana, on enhancing the development of leadership skills in the management of HIV and AIDS in secondary schools (DoE, 2007), reported teachers’ responses as looking upon HIV and AIDS programs as a burden, taking focus off the core school functions. The Botswana survey also pointed to a lack of engagement among heads and deputy heads. This was evident in my study as well, as the school principals were unable to participate in the SMT focus group interviews.

The demands for educational responses to OVC put pressure on the leadership role of the SMTs. The importance of their working with other stakeholders was highlighted by one of the participants;

*“...the school should work with other departments.”*

*“...we can make list of the learners and their needs and organize a social worker who will make sure that these learners’ problems are considered.”*

Concerns related to resources were also prevalent amongst the participants’ responses. The participants were more concerned with making use of the resources that are available to them rather than always expecting support from outside. This was verbalized by one participant as follows:

*“...there are good things that schools can do, but one other thing that is a concern to me is if we structure our school in a way that people help themselves, rather than depending on other people, because now it’s becoming like a culture especially in our country because we always expect that people will be given things.”*

The emphasis on expanding and building on the resources that the communities have, has been strongly argued for (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Notwithstanding this, an asset-based approach emphasizes mobilising and

pulling together the cultural and physical resources, skills, abilities, networks and support systems (Ferreira, 2006), in other words, the assets that already exist and which are locally available for everyday use. The emphasis on expanding the roles of the schools as centres of care and support for OVC requires SMT to be proactive in initiating shared experiences in the school and the development of relationships with other departments. Collaboration is a fundamental asset that could help overcome isolation and helplessness in trying to respond to issues of learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in the school context.

#### **4.3.2 Asset-map**

##### **4.3.2.1 Harnessing and mobilisation of resources**

In response to the second research question, **What available resources do the SMT members draw upon to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS?**, an asset-map of the two SMTs was drawn up to show on which assets they drew to address the issues of OVC in their schools. Participants compiled a collage to illustrate the nature and extent of the challenges, resources and potential resources in the community. The participants made use of both pictures and text to express their views in the collage. This collage served to make the research process more interesting for the SMTs (Norris, Mbokazi, Rorke, Goba & Mitchell, 2007), but also elicited reflection and rich discussion. Each SMT member was encouraged to engage with and identify the resources available to the school for care and support of OVC. Mapping activities were supported by discussing the SMTs' way of utilizing assets and resources in order to respond to issues of OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS. Moreover, the significance of the focus group data is that it allowed the participants to have an opportunity to hear and reflect on the views of others and “elaborate[d] on earlier comments, adding new information, giving the new experience and sometimes different interpretation” (Maree, 2007, p. 108).

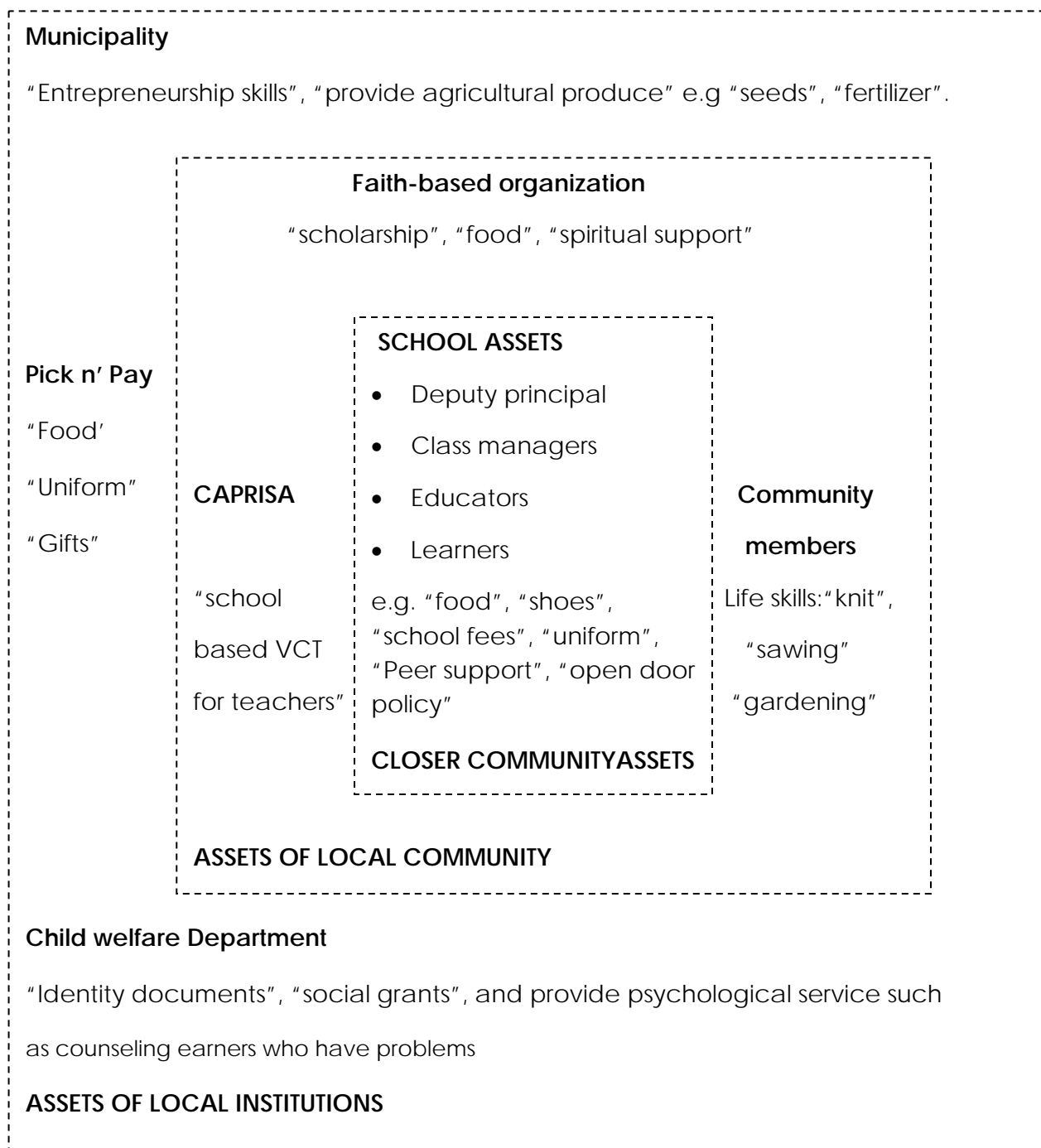
Below is the collage that represents the assets available to the schools as depicted by SMTs.



**Figure 4.2: Collage**

The collage is a useful tool to initially identify the resources available to the school. Cutting pictures and words out of the magazines, the SMT members illustrated what available resources could be mobilised in order to respond to issues of learners orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV and AIDS. From the collage, the SMTs identified various levels of assets on which they could draw in order to respond to the needs of the learners. These include a ‘drop-in-centre’, ‘mentorship’ for learners, ‘entrepreneurship skills’ from local business, ‘peer education’ in school, ‘refresher courses for educators’ and so on (see figure 4.2 above).

I intend here to first analyse the collage in terms of assets, in the form of an asset-map to which Ebersohn and Eloff (2006b, p. 27) refer to as “framework of asset-map” as shown below. I then draw on their discussion to explain the mapping.



**Figure 4.3 Asset-map of the SMTs 'charting the way forward' (Framework adapted (Ebersohn and Eloff, 2006, p. 27)).**

This discussion mainly focuses on the school assets, indicating the participants' understanding thereof. They have however also indicated drawing on the assets of the local community and local institutions in future, as indicated in the asset map

Figure 4.3 encompasses a large number of initiatives to respond to OVC in a rural secondary school of KwaZulu-Natal. Given that these are quite broad categories that encompass entities of various sizes and types, it does however suggest that the SMTs are aware of the challenges of OVC and how other stakeholders can play a major role. OVC are a social concern and there is a substantial amount of assets/resources which need to be considered by the SMTs for care and support of OVC in the school context (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a).

The SMTs' map shows various assets and potential assets in and around the school, upon which they might rely in responding to the challenges faced by OVC in the school context. One of the assets to draw on is the involvement of other learners. This shows that the SMTs identify learners as partners in support of other learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS. This perhaps will provide a glimpse into the world in which children are growing up in this particular context. One participant wrote:

*"...let learners tell their stories."*

*"...encourage learners to talk about HIV and AIDS-related issues...my point is that we might end up with some of the learners coming out to talk about their own experiences, be helped to address problems they are facing in their families."*

*"...they can be bold enough to come and say that this is what we experience at home, one learner told me that her sister is sick and is on ARV."*

The SMTs agreed that learners might be valuable assets to address their own vulnerability. They do not mention the policy of dealing with minors and their own vulnerability. One can question what actions they would take after the learners have told their stories, who exactly should the learners tell their stories to and what support will the SMTs provide to such learners. It is interesting to note that no one indicated what the National Policy on HIV and AIDS for Educators and Learners prescribe in terms of confidentiality which is in line with Section 6.4 of the National Policy on HIV and AIDS:

*“...any person to whom information about the medical conditions a learner, student, educator has divulged, must keep this information confidential.”*

The rights and care and support of the children are the issue here. This is in line also with section 3.4.3 of the Policy framework for orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in South Africa which states that the school should:

*“... develop and ensure that referral systems to other relevant service providers e.g. social worker, nurses are in place”*

This indicated that although SMTs see potential in learners for care and support for other learners in the school context, they could be confronted with a practical situation close to them where the rights of these learners could be violated or their lives endangered. They seem unaware of the legal issues in balancing the rights of learners.

In their collage the participants also positioned educators as the best resources available to respond to issues of OVC. Educators are actually central pillars in any education (Buthelezi, 2004), expanding the roles of the schools to care and support all learners imply sensitizing educators to their roles as stated in the Norms and Standards for Educators, i.e. their pastoral role, “...the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learners and respond to the educational and other needs of the learners and fellow educators” (DoE, 2000, p. 14).

Data from this study have revealed that educators have acted with compassion to try to respond to issues of OVC in the school. It is indeed remarkable work done by educators, as one participant explained:

*“...at school we (teachers) initiated a drop-in-centre where learners can come and eat.”*

Bhana et al. (2006) concur and argue that educators in fact provide basic care for OVC but indicate that these educators often lack adequate skills to provide adequate support. In relation to this, the SMTs explained that teachers do need training and having peer educators was also emphasized;



*“... we are not qualified enough, we are not competent enough to address such issues...maybe one thing we need is to do the refresher course.”*

Identifying assets does not qualify as effective asset mapping, which should include empowering people and motivating people to offer their talents (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005). The SMTs all agreed upon the fact that schools need restructuring in order to provide care and support for learners including those made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS.

*“...schools needs restructuring, refresher courses, teacher counselling, peer educators, peer learners, psychological testing to see if teachers can cope with difficult situations.”*

One question that was raised was who should organize the refresher course? The SMTs indicated that the management (themselves) have to organize it.

While there is little knowledge on strategies to harness and map resources available to the school in relation to OVC, there are other resources shown by the SMTs in their collage on which they can draw. In order to strengthen their capacity to deal with learners' issues, the SMTs suggested collaborating with other community organisations and government sectors. Though few pictures were put onto the collage - which may indicate less exposure to a “mass media collage aesthetic” (Norris, et al., 2007, p. 486), this illustration that they have about pulling the resources together was evident during their group discussion, as indicated below:

*“...organize social worker to the school and help with birth certificates.”*

*“...what we are actually saying here is that, the school should work with other government departments,”*

Realizing the fact that the school alone cannot be responsible for care and support of OVC (DoE, 2003), one large component of mapping resources is to identify sources of social support available to vulnerable children. For example, the Circles of Care project (Cook & Du Toit, 2005) emphasized the importance of connectedness, participation and strategic partnership as an effective strategy for overcoming youth challenges. This is in keeping with Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001b) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) holistic, systemic and inclusive support to respond to issues of children.

It is clear that the predicament of OVC has influenced the SMTs' recognition of the interplay and potential synergy that can be created across sectors as important to learners. All members agreed that schools need to be positioned at the centre of the community;

*"...we need to structure our schools to be centre of community develop – train or help community to help themselves."*

What has become clear is that there is a widespread uncertainty about how to mobilise the resources, except in one incident where the SMT members indicated that the principals are respected and his/her position has enormous responsibility with regard to the lives of OVC. One participant said:

*"...as teachers we started a drop-in-centre and asked the principal's assistance in identifying people whom we can approach"*

Similarly Rayners (2007) pointed to the leadership role of the principal in managing HIV and AIDS at school. Most participants indicated that the principals are leading educators who indeed have major influence on the learners. In spite of this view, the principals did not participate in this study hence their voices were not heard. On the other hand, in one study conducted in Botswana (DoE, 2007) on leadership skills to manage HIV and AIDS in secondary schools, the participants felt that both the principals and the deputy principals do not provide adequate support to HIV and AIDS-related issues due to the major challenges they already have.

These responses by the participants underscore the importance of the role of the principal in providing leadership in respect of HIV and AIDS care and support of OVC. The principal shares the power to manage the school with members of the SMT, he/she is the chair of the SMT, he is also an ex-officio member of the SGB (Buthelezi, 2004), and the dual responsibility of the principal is of vital importance in mobilising and mapping resources.

However, in general, it is safe to say that all children have basic needs, and SMT members weaved the strand of support together in a different pattern, and these include: stable relationships, proper nutrition, good health, positive role models and a socially constructed pathway that children need to survive and thrive in the school context.

## **4.5 CONCLUSION**

The four themes obtained from an analysis of the participants' responses involving underestimated and uncoordinated efforts, engagement with the departmental policies on HIV and AIDS-related issues and mobilisation of resources, represent prominent subsystems within an ecosystemic evaluation and description of responses to OVC within these secondary schools in South Africa. Typically, stronger links between different stakeholders would result in a pool of resources that would enable the SMTs to respond to challenges facing OVC in their schools. Moreover, the asset-based approach to supporting OVC in the context of building stronger school communities seeks the integration of relevant policies as well as help to locate local resources (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a). An asset-based approach recognizes the importance of participation across all sectors and emphasises that every individual possesses a skill/capacity to respond to a situation in his/her context.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“We must do anything and everything to protect children, to give them priority and a better future. This is a call to action and a call to action to embrace new morality that put children where they belong – at the heart of all agendas.”*

(Graca Machel, 1996)

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has indicated that despite the expression of commitment and despite individual SMT members’ responses to addressing the needs of children orphaned and made vulnerable in the age of AIDS, the actual response has been limited in scale, fragmented and short of what is required by the national policies to address issues of OVC. If we acknowledge that HIV and AIDS affect people and particularly, children in different ways, schools’ daily contact with children means that schools have the necessary skills and human resources to make various strategies work (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a; Rayners, 2007). In the long run, the position and capacities of school management play a significant role in addressing issues of OVC in the context of HIV and AIDS.

This study aimed at exploring how the SMTs in two senior secondary schools in a rural area respond to the issue of OVC. Secondly, since the school alone cannot be able to provide care and support to these learners, the study explored how the SMTs draw upon resources available to the school in order to respond. The study yielded several distinct themes and an SMT Asset Map (SAM) of how they chart their way forward - the potential of consolidating existing initiatives in a complementary manner. An asset-based approach provides the framework for a holistic approach in addressing and responding to the issue of OVC.

#### 5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following inferences were made regarding the themes discussed in the previous chapter:

##### 5.2.1 *Underestimating their own individual contributions*

Some successful initiatives in response to the issue of OVC have been taken in the two schools which participated in this study. These were done out of compassion by certain individual SMT

members, mainly providing food, clothes and school fees. However, the participants underestimated and undervalued their own contributions. This could be influenced by and linked to the cultural and African way of 'ubuntu' (Ansell & Young, 2004), which implies taking care of each other. However, the efforts were too small in scale to have resulted in a significant and sustainable way to meet the physical, emotional, academic and financial issues of the many learners who are orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS.

### **5.2.2 *Uncoordinated efforts***

School Management Teams (SMTs) seem to approach issues of OVC in an uncoordinated and rather ad hoc way, focusing mainly on material needs, as shown in the conclusion of the previous theme. Efforts have not been aimed at meeting the physical, emotional, educational and financial needs of learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS (Wood, 2008). Understanding and recognizing the complexities of HIV and AIDS-related issues and the severity of the impact on the child's development, no one person can be able to respond to all issues of OVC (DoE, 2003). For the SMTs, there did not seem to be proper coordination of their efforts in the school. It seems that one or perhaps two educators would respond to few individual learners who happen to be in his/her class. Although these may be good intentions, most learners will still be left unprovided for. All the SMT members in this study indicated the absence of substantial systems or structures in place at their schools. It seems that the SMTs address the issues of OVC by applying their general knowledge. The SMTs' role is to provide a safe environment and structured support to all learners, including those learners orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS. This could be underpinned by the formulation of forward-looking school policies (Buthelezi, 2008).

### **5.2.3 *Engagement with departmental policies***

The DoE (2001a) insisted that each school develops and adopts its own implementation plan on addressing HIV and AIDS and creating an enabling environment for all learners, including OVC. From the participants' responses, it became clear that they are not aware of these imperatives. The only related work that was feasible according to the participants was compiling a list of 'needy learners' for the department. Support for children's needs go beyond access and enrolment if children are to maximize their potential learning (UNESCO, 2006b). As part of a

national, provincial and district education system, every school needs to have a structure to promote a flexible and a caring response. The task of managing the activities at school, including those related to issues of OVC, is at the heart of the SMTs who share power with the principal to manage the school. The position of the principal became evident in this study, as the principal leads the process in reconciling the broader policy framework and translating it into the programmes that are relevant to the school context (Buthelezi, 2004). Policies and programmes enable schools to create a supportive and caring environment for all the learners. They also set a guideline to improve on nutritional, health and medical services for orphaned and other vulnerable children, young people and educators who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. However, the study revealed a lack of initiative by principals in generating a policy for their respective schools, which in itself has far reaching effects on an SMT and school response to addressing the issues of OVC.

#### **5.2.4 SMTs' Asset Map: 'SAM in my school'**

In this study, the position and capacity of the SMTs has led members to re-conceptualise issues of OVC as a broader development focus. The asset-map depicts the participants' responses, based on creating networks to use available capacity more effectively. Realizing the fact that the school alone cannot be responsible for care and support of OVC (DoE, 2003), the individual members of the SMTs identified available resources in the school, communities and partner sectors. A major constraint on this exercise was a lack of a defined expectation of what could be done and the role of the school in drawing on those resources to be utilised to respond to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners. Moreover, it is interesting to note that very little mention was made of the Life Orientation educator as an asset. If one takes a closer look on the Curriculum 2005, then as a Revised National Curriculum, Life Orientation contributes towards the holistic development of all children (Prinsloo, 2007). Therefore Life Orientation educators could be important assets, through whom issues of OVC could be addressed. This again relates to the SMTs' lack of clear vision and policy-oriented programmes with respect to these learners. Any systematic response to the issues of OVC should be manifested in policy strategies, as it will be possible to identify gaps, and mainstream responses within the whole school programme.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as HIV and AIDS erode the capacities of families and communities, it also leaves a huge number of orphaned and other vulnerable children whom the school should be taking in consideration. The educational response to HIV and AIDS becomes the focal point to address the social and health issues through schools (Goldsmith, 2004). The school as an organisation needs to find innovative ways of rebuilding the circles of care for OVC (Kinghorn et al., 2002). Of importance here is the need for the school management team to bridge the gap between policy and practice related to issues of OVC at the level of the school communities; bringing together educators and learners with other resource people to identify and address the needs of *all* learners in a coordinated and effective way.

This brings us to the relevance of the asset-based approach which has been described as a “capacity focused alternative” (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006a, p. 150). Each school and community has a unique combination of assets and capacities and “there is a basic truth that every individual has something to contribute, even though it may not been mobilised yet” (Ibid, 2006a, p.151). In this respect, issues of OVC will not been seen as a burden for the school only, but as having the potential to create synergy in addressing issues of OVC. SMTs therefore, play a role in realizing and mobilising these resources. Their ability to forecast and plan can also inform policies and processes to respond to the learners in their schools. An asset-based approach to address OVC, as espoused by Ebersohn and Eloff (2006a) starts with:

- *Status quo* - It focuses on what is currently available in the present environment and what abilities and capacities of the people are involved (the school infrastructure and human resources: SMTs, educators and learners).
- *An inventory of local associations and organisations* - It may include support groups, faith-based organisations, cultural clubs and youth groups that may contribute to the solutions.
- *An inventory of local institutions* - Those that can contribute resources, materials and services, and may include, health centres, child welfare departments and other partner sectors.

Should the above-mentioned elements be incorporated in care and support of OVC, individuals and/or communities are not regarded as only clients anymore, rather they are empowered to become active members and gain control over the issues that affect them.

McDonald (1997) highlights the creation of school communities that value all its members as problem solvers and whose development comes from within. The social context in South Africa as is in other countries requires an asset-based approach to early intervention that stresses capacity building and internal control (Cook & Du Toit, 2005). In a certain sense, the role of the SMTs in taking an asset-based approach is essential, and they have a very distinct task to plan resources based on information systems.

There are several key lines of action in response to the challenge of ensuring quality education for OVC. These should be a holistic attempt to address all aspects of the child as a learner and to realise what is best for the child in the learning situation and environment. Key actions for the development of healthy schools include these elements:

- HIV and AIDS educational policies are formulated with a view to generate responses to the issues of OVC. SMTs have to contextualize HIV and AIDS legislations and policies that provide them with guiding principles for their leadership in the cultural/local setting.
- Advocate for support and development of a supportive environment. In order to improve the effectiveness of action to respond to the issues of OVC, a school environment should be supportive of all activities and programmes in relation to OVC. This includes identifying a comprehensive range of services in the schools. SMTs should be seen as part of a team with other educators and learners, this is to avoid overburdening other educators and administrators and thereby weakening the school system. SMTs can make an important contribution by holding educators accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as explained in the Norms and Standards of Educators (DoE, 2000a).
- It is essential for the SMTs to perceive their role in considering the role of their schools as the organisation that brings together the various agencies that have an impact upon the health of OVC. Some school members may resist action until they can see good reason to be committed to it. Therefore, school HIV policy has to be clear with regard to the processes and systems sensitive to issues of OVC. For example, identifying OVC can follow a system



or process known to every educator. In other words, the role of SMTs is creating foundation for action (Buthelezi, 2008).

- Mobilise existing national resources. SMTs must develop partnerships for care and support for learners orphaned and vulnerable in the school. This involves sectors such as clinics, other schools, child welfare and social security. This would involve collaboration and coordination with other sectors for delivery of services such school feeding, water and sanitation, guidance and counselling to mention but a few. The key aspect here is to draw up a school asset map (SAM), as explained by Ebersohn and Eloff, 2006a, p. 27).

*“This is the process of making a graphical representation of identified assets in the system in which the teaching and helping profession is working. This process of making assets ‘visual’ is intended to initiate or ‘kick-start’ the process of asset mobilisation.”*

I therefore recommend that the SMTs brainstorm and draw up an asset-map and place it on the notice board so that it is at the disposal of the whole school community.

- This process of developing an asset-map has led to the careful consideration of the implication of choosing an asset-based approach to school intervention for OVC. The participants were not knowledgeable about this approach and therefore constantly reflected on the validity of their actions, getting feedback from one another and identifying gaps. The impulse was to fall back on what is known and what is familiar, and how relevant it is, in responding to the issues of OVC in their school contexts. It is therefore critical that the SMTs, with the principal, create the opportunity to draw on all the assets available in the school and community. Specific action is needed to establish a whole school campaign to build and extend the asset-map, in this instance with regard to responding to OVC.

Although the department requires a ‘list of needy learners’, the school has to keep a database to help monitor and keep track of all the activities. A simple register sheet as proposed by Wood (2008) includes:

- Child name
- Family circumstances
- Specific needs

- Action taken/category of support
- Follow-up
- Person/institute responsible.

A simple database like the above could be the central focus of developing the asset-map, and could influence the direction of the support drawn on.

Referring to the above, an asset-based approach to addressing barriers to learning and development could be included in the professional training of teachers, the in-service development of principals and SMTs, as the theoretical and practical aspects of an asset-based approach are critical for responding to the holistic development of all learners.

The above responds to the themes of the educators perceiving their own initiatives as insignificant, and as uncoordinated, unguided by policy and failing to draw on available assets. It is also important to engender the notions underpinning the asset-based approach in the educators, encouraging them to see themselves as having agency in their responses to the orphaned and vulnerable learners at school.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The following recommendations for future research have been provided below:

- This study was conducted in two rural public senior secondary schools. It would be interesting to conduct a study within a different context, such as a private education institution in an urban area. Such study would explore how the SMTs in an urban area respond to the issues of learners orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS in the school context.
- The study specifically aimed at the SMTs and therefore, it would be significant to reproduce the study with respect to SGBs for a more comprehensive picture of school management's response to OVC.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

There has been a strong indication that in order for any response to be successful, it must be driven by strong leadership, commitment and coordination. Care and support efforts for OVC must be seen as a central part of school provisioning, and SMTs need to draw on all ‘partners’ in their effort to respond to issues of orphaned and vulnerable learners. Collaboration is a key element in this teamwork, which has the potential to create a synergistic effort. Mainstreaming the issues of OVC in the whole school programme should be seen as a necessity as these children are born citizens before they become orphaned and vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

SMTs are aware of the impact of OVC in the school context. At a theoretical level, they understand the learners and have attempted to address the issues of OVC, by drawing on their personal assets as well as on collaborating with communities and or government departments. However, there did not seem to be substantial systems or structures at school level which could make such support even and sustainable. Without understanding the challenges that lie ahead and having a firm plan, individual support may fall apart. Collectively the SMTs have the necessary skills and human resources to make various strategies work, but it is important that there should be development of such skills, maintaining them and creating appropriate organisational structures (Rayners, 2007).. This is summed up by one participant’s comment:

*“I nearly resigned because what I’m doing has no direction.”*

This raises the importance of harnessing energies collectively within an asset-based framework, supported by departmental and school policy.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Interview guideline for the focus interview with the SMT

Appendix B: Interview guideline for the arts-based focus group with the  
SMTs from the two schools

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance approval

Appendix D: Application letter to the District Manager

Appendix E: Application letter to the Principal

Appendix F: Consent form to the participant

Appendix G: Sample of a transcript

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH THE SMT**

**Q1. What are the issues of orphaned and vulnerable children in your school?**

- What is the nature of orphaned and vulnerable children in your school?
- What types of orphaned children do you have at school? Are they more of maternal, paternal or both?
- What are other cases that made learners vulnerable? Give examples; elaborate on those issues.
- How would you explain/describe the effect of orphaned and vulnerable children in day-to-day running of the school?

**Q2. How do you know about issues of orphaned and vulnerable children in your School?**

- How do you identify orphaned and vulnerable children?
- Do you have evidence/statistics relating to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in your school?
- Who is responsible for collecting the statistics?
- Are there any aspects or issues of learners being orphaned and made vulnerable due to HIV/AIDS? How does evidence of this present itself?
- How does the school cater for learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS?

**Q3. What departmental policies, regulations and other relevant documents are pertinent to the area of orphaned and vulnerable children?**

- Does the school has or is aware of such policies?
- What are the practical implications of these policies with the school context?
- Is there a school policy on orphaned and vulnerable children in existence?

- Who was responsible for designing the school's OVC policy?
- Would you consider having policies on orphaned and vulnerable children valuable? Please elaborate.

**Q4.** What are some of the factors/challenges that face schools in relation to orphaned and vulnerable children in the context of HIV/AIDS? Please elaborate in detail.

**The above questions will only serve as a guideline in the interview process. Ultimately the responses of the participants and the probes of the researcher will serve to initiate additional questions, thereby enriching the quality of data obtained.**



## **APPENDIX B**

### **CALDERWOOD HOUSE PROGRAMME**

**08 NOVEMBER 2007**

#### **MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS WHO ARE ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE**

##### **SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS OF THE TWO SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

- 1. 1300 LUNCH TOGETHER**
- 2. 1400 SETTLING IN OUR GROUPS**

#### **RESEARCH**

**Review of the last meeting purpose of this meeting (Naydene)**

**Consent (Fumane)**

**Challenges facing the school in relation to orphanhood (Fumane)**

**Explain the task at hand: 'the collage' (Fumane)**

**Doing the task – 2 groups doing the collage**

**Getting feedback – Groups explain their collages**

**Questions to the groups (Fumane & Naydene)**

- 3. 1545 T E A**
- 4. 1600 Departure**

**Thank you for your participation**

## **Task 1: Caring for children has costs**

### **Case 1: Nabutaka village**

In this household a husband and wife, aged 30 and 27 respectively, are caring for eight children; their own 5-year-old girl and 1-year-old boy plus six orphans:

16-year-old boy, a nephew, paternal orphan; the wife's brother aged 12 and 6 (double orphans); a 6-year-old boy, nephew, double orphan; a 5-year-old girl niece, paternal orphan; and a 5-year-old boy; nephew, paternal orphan.

The dependency ratio of this household has increased dramatically as a result of fostering of children from five different deceased relatives. The 16-year-old boy is in secondary school, but the foster parents are struggling to find the school fees. The guardian is trying to persuade him to change to a technical school, as he thinks that this will be better for the household in the long run.

### **Case 2: Kabanyi village**

There are 11 people in this household. In addition to the husband, 65 years, and wife, 40 years, there are nine children, six of whom are orphans: a 14-year-old girl; a 12-year-old girl; a 10-year-old boy; a 6-year-old girl; and a 5-year-old girl. These are all paternal orphans, grandchildren of the household head and children of his deceased son. They have lived in this household for four years, since their mother remarried. In addition there is a 6-year-old boy, a grandchild who has lost both parents to AIDS.

Fostering has caused enormous financial strain on this household. The children show signs of malnutrition, not surprising when the dependency ratio has increased three times.

Source: Barnett & Whiteside, 2002, p. 205

## Task 2: Some statistics

Cumulative number of children estimated to have been orphaned by AIDS at age 14 or younger at the end of 1999.

*Source: UNAIDS 2000.*

North America	70 000
Latin America	110 000
Caribbean	85 000
Western Europe	9 000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	500
East Asia & Pacific	5 600
South & South-east Asia	850 000
North Africa & Middle East	15 000
Sub-Saharan Africa	12.1 million

**NOTE:** By the end of 1999 there were 13.2 million children worldwide who had lost their mother or both parents to AIDS before the age of 15 years, of whom 12.1 million were in Africa.

*Source: Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007*

South Africa is predicted to have 2.3 million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS by 2020

*Source: & Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007*

Orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa: 13% children between 2 – 14 years lost parents.

## Task 3: Explaining the task

### ‘The Collage’

Collage: Putting ideas together using pictures and the text

Responding to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS

Using a combination of pictures and text, make a collage showing any resources which are available to you as the school which will help to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS, that is:

- What do you think/how do you think you can help orphaned learners who are vulnerable in your schools?
- Make a collage of how you think the school can help to respond orphaned learners who are vulnerable by drawing on any resources that you think can help you.

### Leading question for the SMTs

- What resources are available at the school (both human and material)?
- What resources are available to the school?
- What would you as SMT do – if anything – to support learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS? (what exactly do you think you will go about connecting or engaging other stakeholders)
- What would be the policy of the school in this case with respect to respond to learners who are orphaned and vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS?

APPENDIX C



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

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12 DECEMBER 2007

PROF. N DE LANGE (1626)  
EDUCATION STUDIES

Dear Prof. de Lange

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0614/07

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Every voice counts: Teachers and schools in rural communities addressing children's vulnerabilities in the age of AIDS (2007 – 2011)"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc: Prof. D Bhana

## **APPENDIX D**



Mr. Mazibuko  
District Manager  
Vulindlela District  
Pietermaritzburg

Dear Sir

### **APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

I am presently reading for my Master Degree in Education (Educational Psychology) through the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and as such I am required to carry out research to write up a dissertation. I hereby request permission to carry out my research in schools in the Vulindlela area.

The title of my research is "School Management Teams' response to orphaned learners who are vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS: A study of two senior secondary schools in a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal." The aim of this study is to find out how the school management team identifies learners who are orphaned and what issues are available in the school context that makes learning difficult for such learners. The second aim is to find out how the school management teams respond to challenges facing the school in relation to orphanhood by drawing on all resources that are available to them.

Initially, there will be focus group interviews with the SMTs at their respective schools. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes. The second session will involve participation of two SMTs from both schools, whereby the SMTs will explore through a collage and a focus group how they imagine the issue of orphaned

children in the context of HIV/AIDS could be best be addressed. After making collages, participants will explain their collages. In both of these sessions, I will need to audio and video record the discussions. However this will be upon participants' agreement. If so, participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years.

The second session will take place outside the school and also after school hours. Participants will be provided with transport to attend to the second session.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research project, as well as in the reporting of the findings are assured. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall them. For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors.

I trust that my request is acceptable.

Yours sincerely

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**DR. T. BUTHELEZI**  
**Tel no:** 031 260 3471  
**E-mail:** [buthelazit10@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:buthelazit10@ukzn.ac.za)

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## DECLARATION

I ..... (**full name**) hereby grant/do not grant permission to F. Khanare for research to be conducted in Vulindlela schools.

## **APPENDIX E**



The Principal

### **APPLICATION FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

I am currently reading for my Master Degree in Education (Educational Psychology) through the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and as such I am required to carry out research to write up a dissertation. I hereby request permission to carry out my research at your school. Furthermore, I request your permission to conduct interviews with staff members particularly the School Management Team.

The title of my research is School management teams' response to orphaned learners who are vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS: A study of two senior secondary schools in a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of this study is to find out how the school management team identifies learners who are orphaned and what issues are available in the school context that makes learning difficult for such learners. The second aim is to find out how the school management teams respond to challenges facing the school in relation to orphanhood by drawing on all resources that are available to them.

Initially, there will be focus group interviews with the SMTs at their respective schools. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes. The second session will involve participation of two SMTs from both schools, whereby the SMTs will explore through a collage and a focus group how they imagine the issue of orphaned children in the context of HIV/AIDS could be best be addressed. After making collages, participants will explain their collages. In both of these sessions, I will need to audio and



video record the discussions. However this will be upon participants' agreement. If so, participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years.

The second session will take place outside the school and also after school hours. Participants will be provided with transport to attend to the second session.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research project, as well as in the reporting of the findings is assured. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Participation is purely voluntary therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall them. For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors.

I trust that my request is acceptable.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

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---

## DECLARATION

I ..... (**full name**) hereby grant/do not grant permission to F. Khanare for research to be conducted at the school.

## **APPENDIX F**



Dear Participant

### **INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am conducting a research project to investigate how school management teams respond to orphaned learners who are vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS. This is in part-fulfillment of the requirements of the Masters Degree in Education (Educational Psychology) which I am currently pursuing at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The title of my research is School management teams' response to orphaned learners who are vulnerable in the context of HIV/AIDS: A study of two senior secondary schools in a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. The aim of this study is to find out how the school management team identifies learners who are orphaned and what issues are available in the school context that makes learning difficult for such learners. The second aim is to find out how the school management teams respond to challenges facing the school in relation to orphanhood by drawing on all resources that are available to them.

In order to achieve this, your participation is cordially requested. Initially, there will be focus group interviews with the SMTs at your respective schools. The estimated time for such interviews will be 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes. The second session will involve participation of two SMTs from both schools, whereby the SMTs will explore through a collage and a focus group how they imagine the issue of orphaned children in the context of HIV/AIDS could be best be addressed. After making collages, participants will explain their collages. In both of these sessions, I will need to audio and video record the discussions. However this will be upon your agreement. If so, you are guaranteed

anonymity and confidentiality and that the data will be only used for research purposes and will be securely kept with the university after 5 years.

The second session will take place outside the school and also after school hours. Participants will be provided with transport to attend to the second session.

Your anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research project, as well as in the reporting of the findings is assured. Schools and individuals will not be identified in the dissertation as I will use fictitious names. Your participation is purely voluntary therefore you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any given stage and no harm will befall you. For any further information, I have enclosed herein the contacts of my supervisors. Please complete the consent form attached should you decide to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely

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## **DECLARATION**

(To be completed by participant)

I ..... (**full name of participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....

Participant's signature

.....

Date

## APPENDIX G

### SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT: 02 OCTOBER 2007

- F: My first question is related to orphaned and vulnerable children, so what are the issues around orphaned and vulnerable children in the school?
- X: Uhm, by vulnerable children, what are you actually referring to?
- F: Ok! What do understand, what do you think, what do you understand?
- X: Hmm, I don't know if I'm right to say maybe those affected by circumstance, like adverse life circumstances, I don't know if I'm right? To say those we can classify as vulnerable?
- F: Ok, so, what are the issues around what you think vulnerability means and the orphaned?
- X: Uhm, [pause] maybe I, I would say in, in the case of our school we, we, we do have such children but for now it's, it's just a matter of statistics because I remember I think it was last year when we were filling some forms from the department where they were actually asking how many orphans? How many this how many that? So it's, for now it's just a matter of numbers so nothing it's been done about those children?
- F: Ok! Before we go to that one, can you give an explanation, you said for those children, which ones are you referring to?
- X: I mean eh, especially, I'm referring to the orphans because I was the one who was collecting the information so I noted that there are children who are orphans in our school.
- F: So there are children who are orphaned?
- X: Yes, There are children who are orphans.
- F: And then you talked about those who are affected of which you can say are vulnerable, do you have such issues of vulnerability?
- X: Eh, I think one most, occurring incident in our school it's a case of children living with elderly old parents, may be you find that the mother got married somewhere and then she left the child to live with the grand parents, so those are some of the cases that we have and sometimes you find that may be the child is living with eh, the aunties, eh, the mother is working somewhere in town or as I said may be the mother of the father got married to somebody else and then the child find, find himself or herself having not a home then she had to stay with grand mothers or something like that so those are type of the situations that we, we normally have, we are not sure of eh, HIV/AIDS cases but we understand that there are such cases but we are not sure as for how many numbers.
- F: Ok, besides the issue of staying with the elderly parents, because you said some of them maybe they are vulnerable because they stay with elderly person, that's what you said right?
- X: Right!
- F: Are there other issues, other circumstances that you can say ok, these children are affected besides such things of elderly persons?
- X: Uhm, very few cases that we have handled, I mean things like abuse, yes I remember there was once a child who came to the teachers reporting such a case

- but I don't know may be they chose to keep quite about those things, may be we are not aware of them but I will assume that there are such cases.
- F: Ok so far, I think if I understand you quiet well you said, you view these kids being vulnerable because they stay with elderly parents, am I right?
- X: Right!
- F: Because parents are moving because of job opportunities or all those information and there is that kind of abuse
- X: Yes, there are cases of abuse also may be I can add as, as a Life Orientation teacher, you know you, you, sometimes you do note the way they answer something, the way they will talk, you, you become suspicious in saying may such people have experienced have really experienced these things but they, they won't come out to say this is, this is the experience
- F: So you say through your experience
- X: But, but some of them, may be to add on, on, on that, you, you sometimes you feel that sometimes some of them are not are not well cared for. You sometimes you see through I mean through looking at the child's appearance and you can say, Ei, may be this one, some will come, for instance, there is a boy I know, most of the teachers know, sometimes like when I'm eating may be I will eat half and then leave half for that particular boy in grade 12 because I know of the situation, in fact I, I've been to his home at one stage then I know the situation, but there are so many other cases, mean, mean, there are other cases like, like that because I mean some other teachers like eh, Mr. S, I remember last year uhm, he bought some shoes for a particular boy and I remember I did the same thing as well, one day I took my shoes and I gave to one grade 12 boy because I could see that, he was wearing such very torn shoes, so there are cases like that.
- F: Ok, thanks very much, eh, how do you know, I know you talked about you were like observing them in class, other issues, how do you get to know about them? especially the ones that you have already talked about them like staying with the parents, how do you know about the issues?
- X: Uhm, besides those, besides the statistics that I took which the department required, that, that was one way I could, I could understand the situation.
- F: Ok, on that issue of statistics, you were the one who was collecting
- X: Yes I was the one who, who was actually collecting that information, so I came to know at that point that oh! we have, we have so many, because they wanted things like in a particular class how many boys are like this, how many boys are like this, so, so that is how I got to know,. Uhm, but may be the, the other way it's, it's not something that one can confirm but still knowing our communities, we still know our communities, for instance you, you find that when they come at the beginning of the year to register, eh, it is one of the requirements of the school that they should come with their parents and majority of them will come with their grandparents, come with their grandparents or they will come with the, with the, an aunt or somebody else not their actual parent. In fact I would say 80% of the time it's like that, they come with their grandparents. Even if, there are cases whereby we say go call your parent and most of the time is the grand parent not the actual parent, yah!

- F: I'm more interested in this one, you talked about the statistics, you were the one who's doing it, do you ever asked assistance of other teachers or personally you do it?
- X: No, in fact, in fact, it's the, it's the class managers who will do that and then they submit to me and then I make what do they call, the summary of the whole thing [ but its through the class managers, they collect the information...
- F: Ok, eh, one other question is that, you are aware of the issues of orphans and vulnerable children in your school, am I right?
- X: Yes, Yes, I would say, I would say that.
- F: Ok, so what do you do about those issues?
- X: [pause] there, there is nothing that eh, I would say the school is actually doing, is practically doing the, there is, there is no plan of some sort, meant to, to, address these things, that is why in the beginning I said that, it ends up being the matter of numbers, but there are no any further steps to, to adjust the whole thing, may be except for those individual teachers, because some times, some kids will actually maybe confide to their class managers, so we end up knowing that, in, such and such a class may be there is a particular boy who is very needy. But some as I said, will be quite; so such, let's be honest, there is nothing that the school is doing about, about that, there, there is nothing.
- F: But you raised like there are something like there are those individual teachers, do you know what do they do?
- X: Some, some, of the teachers will even go as far as even paying the school fees, for the particular learner: Eh, I remember, Miss G, who was, second deputy-principal, she is no longer here, everyday, in fact I think for the, for the last years and how many years, she will come, with extra sandwiches for that particular family. I mean that talk about grade twelve, so, so every, everyday after school they would come and then collect from the clerk; she would leave there, and they would come and collect from the clerk, those are the cases mean some of the cases that I can, that I know of, yah.
- F: Ok so, but besides the provision of good, what other things do they do?
- X: Uhm, I think that's, that's, that's all I know. That's all I know, that provision of food, sometimes I'm buying them the uniform, because I remember the, yes some of them buy them uniform like, there was once a, a lady, she is on longer in this school, but even if, even when she went away, she will still check that particular boy whom, she referred to, I think she referred to some of, some of the members of her church, so that they were supporting the boy, I think right now she is, he is at a college, and I think it's also through the effort of that particular teacher. So, they were buying things like uniform, even supporting him general well being like food at home and things like that, yah.
- F: So, can you say there is something that has been done, I know you talked about, you, I just want to get it clear you talked about the programme, like the school doesn't have the programme?
- X: Yes, the school, I wouldn't say, say it's the initiative of the school though it's happening within the school premises, but I wouldn't say it's the initiative of the school, nothing, nothing has been done to address by the school, it's only those individual teachers not the school but, there is no particular programme that we

can say maybe we sat down as the staff and then we plan how are we going to address such issues you know there is, there is no such a thing, yah!

F: Ok, thank you very much.